



Romance of the Three Kingdoms

(三國演義)

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(羅貫中)

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Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Prologue

THE BEGINNING SONG

So is it sung:

O so vast, O so mighty,
The Great River rolls to sea.
Flowers do waves thrash,
Heroes do sands smash.
When all the dreams drain,
Same are loss and gain.

Green mountains remain,
Under pink sunsets,
Hoary fishers and woodcutters,
Along the banks, find calm water,
In autumn moon or in spring wind,
By the wine jars, fill porcelain.

Discuss talk and tale,
Only laugh and gale...



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT I:

INSTABILITY, CORRUPTION, AND
REBELLION:

THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF HAN

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act I

CHAPTER 1

THREE HEROES SWEAR BROTHERHOOD IN THE PEACH GARDEN; ONE
VICTORY SHATTERS THE REBELS IN BATTLE.

The world under heaven, after a long period of division, tends to unite; after a long period of union, tends to divide. This has been so since antiquity. When the rule of the Zhou Dynasty weakened, seven contending kingdoms sprang up, warring one with another until the kingdom of Qin prevailed and possessed the empire. But when Qin's destiny had been fulfilled, arose two opposing kingdoms, Chu and Han, to fight for the mastery. And Han was the victor.

The rise of the fortunes of Han began when Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor slew a white serpent to raise the banners of uprising, which only ended when the whole empire belonged to Han (BC 202). This magnificent heritage was handed down in successive Han emperors for two hundred years, till the rebellion of Wang Mang caused a disruption. But soon Liu Xiu the Latter Han Founder restored the empire, and Han emperors continued their rule for another two hundred years till the days of Emperor Xian, which were doomed to see the beginning of the empire's division into three parts, known to history as The Three Kingdoms.

But the descent into misrule hastened during the reigns of the two predecessors of Emperor Xian, Emperors Huan and Ling, who sat in the Dragon Throne about the middle of the second century.

Emperor Huan paid no heed to the good people of his court, but gave his confidence to the Palace eunuchs. He lived and died, leaving the scepter

to Emperor Ling, whose advisers were Regent Marshal Dou Wu and Imperial Guardian Chen Fan. Dou Wu and Chen Fan, disgusted with the eunuchs' abuses in the affairs of the state, plotted the destruction for the power-abusing eunuchs. But Chief Eunuch Cao Jie was not to be disposed of easily. The plot leaked out, and the honest Dou Wu and Chen Fan were put to death, leaving the eunuchs stronger than before.

It fell upon the day of full moon of the fourth month, the second year, in the era of Established Calm (AD 168), that Emperor Ling went in state to the Hall of Virtue. As he drew near the throne, a rushing whirlwind arose in the corner of the hall and, lo! from the roof beams floated down a monstrous, black serpent that coiled itself up on the very seat of majesty. The Emperor fell in a swoon. Those nearest him hastily raised and bore him to his palace, while the courtiers scattered and fled. The serpent disappeared.

But there followed a terrific tempest—thunder, hail, and torrents of rain—lasting till midnight and wreaking havoc on all sides. Two years later, the earth quaked in Capital Luoyang, while along the coast, a huge tidal wave rushed in, which, in its recoil, swept away all the dwellers by the sea. Another evil omen was recorded ten years later, when the reign title was changed to Radiant Harmony (AD 178): certain hens suddenly crowed. At the new moon of the sixth month, a long wreath of murky cloud wound its way into the Hall of Virtue, while in the following month a rainbow was seen in the Dragon Chamber. Away from the capital, a part of the Yuan Mountains collapsed, leaving a mighty rift in the flank.

Such were some of the myriad omens. Emperor Ling, greatly moved by these signs of the displeasure of Heaven, issued an edict asking his ministers for an explanation of the calamities and marvels.

Court Counselor Cai Yong replied bluntly: “Falling rainbows and changes of fowls’ sexes are brought about by the interference of empresses and eunuchs in state affairs.”

The Emperor read this memorial with deep sighs, and Chief Eunuch Cao Jie, from his place behind the throne, anxiously noted these signs of grief. An opportunity offering, Cao Jie informed his fellows, and a charge was trumped up against Cai Yong, who was driven from the court and forced to retire to his country house.

With this victory, the eunuchs grew bolder. Ten of them, rivals in wickedness and associates in evil deeds, formed a powerful party known as the Ten Regular Attendants: Zhang Rang, Zhao Zhong, Cheng Kuang, Duan Gui, Feng Xu, Guo Sheng, Hou Lan, Jian Shuo, Cao Jie, and Xia Yun.

One of them, Zhang Rang, won such influence that he became the Emperor’s most honored and trusted adviser. The Emperor even called him “Foster Father.” So the corrupt state administration went quickly from bad to worse, till the country was ripe for rebellion and buzzed with brigandage.

At this time in the county of Julu was a certain Zhang family, of whom three brothers bore the name of Zhang Jue, Zhang Ba, and Zhang Lian, respectively. The eldest, Zhang Jue, was an unclassed graduate who devoted himself to medicine.

One day, while culling samples in the woods, Zhang Jue met a venerable, old gentleman with very bright, emerald eyes and fresh complexion who walked with an oak-wood staff. The old man beckoned Zhang Jue into a cave and there gave him three volumes of *The Book of Heaven*.

“This book,” said the old gentleman, “is the *Essential Arts of Peace*. With the aid of these volumes, you can convert the world and rescue humankind. But you must be single-minded, or, rest assured, you will greatly suffer.”

With a humble obeisance, Zhang Jue took the book and asked the name of his benefactor.

“I am Saint Hermit of the Southern Land,” was the reply, as the old gentleman disappeared into thin air.

Zhang Jue studied the wonderful book eagerly and strove day and night to reduce its precepts to practice. Before long, he could summon the winds and command the rain, and he became known as the Mystic of the Way of Peace.

In the first month of the first year of Central Stability (AD 184), there was a terrible pestilence that ran throughout the land, whereupon Zhang Jue distributed charmed remedies to the afflicted. The godly medicines yielded major successes, and soon he gained the title of the Wise and Worthy Master. He began to have a following of disciples whom he initiated into the mysteries and sent abroad throughout all the land. They, like their master, could write charms and recite formulas, and their fame increased his following.

Zhang Jue began to organize his disciples. He established thirty-six circuits, the larger with ten thousand or more members, the smaller with about half that number. Each circuit had its chief who took the military title of General. They talked wildly of the death of the blue heaven and the setting up of the golden one; they said a new cycle was beginning and would bring universal good fortune to all members, and they persuaded people to chalk the symbols for the first year of the new cycle on the main door of their dwellings.

With the growth of the number of his supporters grew also the ambition of Zhang Jue. The Wise and Worthy Master dreamed of empire. One of his partisans, Ma Yuanyi, was sent bearing gifts to gain the support of the eunuchs within the Palace.

To his brothers, Zhang Jue said, "For schemes like ours, always the most difficult part is to gain the popular favor. But that is already ours. Such an opportunity must not pass."

And they began to prepare. Many yellow flags and banners were made, and a day was chosen for the uprising. Then Zhang Jue wrote letters to Feng Xu and sent them by one of his followers, Tang Zhou, who alas! betrayed his trust and reported the plot to the court.

The Emperor summoned the trusty Regent Marshal He Jin and bade him look into the issue. Ma Yuanyi was at once taken and beheaded. Feng Xu and many others were cast into prison.

The plot having thus become known, the Zhang brothers were forced at once to take the field. They took up grandiose titles: Zhang Jue the Lord of Heaven, Zhang Ba the Lord of Earth, and Zhang Lian the Lord of Humanity. And in these names they put forth this manifesto:

"The good fortune of the Han is exhausted, and the Wise and Worthy Man has appeared. Discern the will of Heaven, O ye people, and walk in the way of righteousness, whereby alone ye may attain peace."

Support was not lacking. On every side, people bound their heads with yellow scarves and joined the army of the rebel Zhang Jue, so that soon his strength was nearly half-a-million strong, and the official troops melted away at a whisper of his coming.

Regent Marshal and Imperial Guardian He Jin ordered for general preparations against the Yellow Scarves, and an edict called upon everyone to fight against the rebels. In the meantime, three Imperial Commanders—Lu Zhi, Huangfu Song, and Zhu Jun—marched against them in three directions with veteran soldiers.

Meanwhile, Zhang Jue led his army into Youzhou, the northeastern region of the empire. The Imperial Protector of Youzhou was Liu Yan, a scion of the Imperial House. Learning of the approach of the rebels, Liu Yan called in Commander Zhou Jing to consult over the position.

Zhou Jing said, “They are many and we few. We must enlist more troops to oppose them.”

Liu Yan agreed, and he put out notices calling for volunteers to serve against the rebels. One of these notices was posted up in the county of Zhuo, where lived one man of high spirit.

This man was no mere bookish scholar, nor found he any pleasure in study. But he was liberal and amiable, albeit a man of few words, hiding all feeling under a calm exterior. He had always cherished a yearning for high enterprise and had cultivated the friendship of humans of mark. He was tall of stature. His ears were long, the lobes touching his shoulders, and his hands hung down below his knees. His eyes were very big and prominent so that he could see backward past his ears. His complexion was as clear as jade, and he had rich, red lips.

He was a descendant of Prince Sheng of Zhongshan, whose father was the Emperor Jing (reigned BC 157-141), the fourth emperor of the Han Dynasty.

His name was Liu Bei. Many years before, one of his forebears had been the governor of that very county, but had lost his rank for remissness in ceremonial offerings. However, that branch of the family had remained in the area, gradually becoming poorer and poorer as the years rolled on. His father Liu Hong had been a scholar and a virtuous official, but died young. The widow and orphan were left alone, and Liu Bei, as a lad, won a reputation for filial piety.

By this time, the family had sunk deep in poverty, and Liu Bei gained his living by selling straw sandals and weaving grass mats. The family home was in a village near the chief city of Zhuo. Near the house stood a huge mulberry tree, and seen from afar, its curved profile resembled the canopy of a wagon. Noting the luxuriance of its foliage, a soothsayer had predicted that, one day, a man of distinction would come forth from the family.

As a child, Liu Bei played with the other village children beneath this tree, and he would climb up into it, saying, "I am the Son of Heaven, and this is my chariot!" His uncle, Liu Yuanqi, recognized that Liu Bei was no ordinary boy and saw to it that the family did not come to actual want.

When Liu Bei was fifteen, his mother sent him traveling for his education. For a time he served Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi as masters, and he became great friends with Gongsun Zan.

Liu Bei was twenty-eight when the outbreak of the Yellow Scarves called for soldiers. The sight of the notice saddened him, and he sighed as he read it.

Suddenly, a rasping voice behind him cried, "Sir, why sigh if you do nothing to help your country?"

Turning quickly, he saw, standing there, a man about his own height, with a bullet head like a leopard's, large eyes, a swallow-pointed chin, and whiskers like a tiger's. He spoke in a loud, bass voice and looked as irresistible as a dashing horse. At once, Liu Bei saw he was no ordinary man and asked who he was.

"Zhang Fei is my name," replied the stranger. "I live near here, where I have a farm, and I am a wine seller and a butcher as well, and I like to become acquainted with worthy people. Your sighs as you read the notice drew me toward you."

Liu Bei replied, "I am of the Imperial Family; Liu Bei is my name. And I wish I could destroy these Yellow Scarves and restore peace to the land, but alas! I am helpless."

"I have the means," said Zhang Fei. "Suppose you and I raised some troops and tried what we could do."

This was happy news for Liu Bei, and the two betook themselves to the village inn to talk over the project. As they were drinking, a huge, tall fellow appeared, pushing a hand-cart along the road. At the threshold, he halted and entered the inn to rest awhile, and he called for wine.

"And be quick" added he, "for I am in haste to get into the town and offer myself for the army!"

Liu Bei looked over the newcomer, item by item, and he noted that the man had a huge frame, a long beard, a vivid face like an apple, and deep, red lips. He had eyes like a phoenix's and fine, bushy eyebrows like silkworms. His whole appearance was dignified and awe-inspiring. Presently, Liu Bei crossed over, sat down beside him, and asked his name.

“I am Guan Yu,” replied he. “I am a native of the east side of the river, but I have been a fugitive on the waters for some five years because I slew a ruffian who, since he was wealthy and powerful, was a bully. I have come to join the army here.”

Then Liu Bei told Guan Yu his own intentions, and all three went away to Zhang Fei’s farm, where they could talk over the grand project.

Said Zhang Fei, “The peach trees in the orchard behind the house are just in full flower. Tomorrow, we will institute a sacrifice there and solemnly declare our intention before Heaven and Earth, and we three will swear brotherhood and unity of aims and sentiments: thus will we enter upon our great task.” Both Liu Bei and Guan Yu gladly agreed.

All three being of one mind, next day, they prepared the sacrifices: a black ox, a white horse, and wine for libation. Beneath the smoke of the incense burning on the altar, they bowed their heads and recited this oath:

“We three—Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei—though of different families, swear brotherhood and promise mutual help to the end. We will rescue each other in difficulty; we will aid each other in danger. We swear to serve the state and save the people. We ask not for the same day of birth, but we seek to die together. May Heaven, the all-ruling, and Earth, the all-producing, read our hearts. If we turn aside from righteousness or forget kindness, may Heaven and Humanity smite us!”

They rose from their knees. The two others bowed before Liu Bei as their elder Brother; Zhang Fei was the youngest of the trio. This solemn ceremony performed, they slew other oxen and made a feast, to which they invited the villagers. Three hundred joined them, and all feasted and drank deep in the Peach Garden.

The next day, weapons were mustered, but there were no horses to ride. This was a real grief. But soon they were cheered by the arrival of two horse dealers with a drove of horses.

“Thus does Heaven help us!” said Liu Bei, and the Three Brothers went forth to welcome the merchants. They were Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang from Zhongshan. They went northwards every year to buy horses. They were now on their way home because of the Yellow Scarves.

The Brothers invited them to the farm, where wine was served before them. Then Liu Bei told them of the plan to strive for tranquility. Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang were glad and at once gave the Brothers fifty good steeds and, beside, five hundred ounces of gold and silver and one thousand five hundred pounds of steel fit for the forging of weapons.

The Brothers expressed their gratitude, and the merchants took their leave. Then blacksmiths were summoned to forge weapons. For Liu Bei, they made a pair of ancient swords; for Guan Yu, they fashioned a long-handled, curved blade called Green-Dragon Saber, which weighed a full one hundred pounds; and for Zhang Fei, they created a ten-foot spear called Serpent Halberd. Each, too, had a helmet and full armor.

When the weapons were ready, the troop, now five hundred strong, marched to Commander Zhou Jing, who presented them to Imperial Protector Liu Yan. When the ceremony of introduction was over, Liu Bei declared his ancestry, and Liu Yan at once accorded him esteem due to a relation.

Before many days had passed, it was announced that the rebellion had actually broken out, and a Yellow Scarves chieftain, Cheng Yuanzhi, had

invaded the region with a body of fifty thousand rebels. Liu Yan bade Zhou Jing and the Three Brothers to go out to oppose them with the five hundred troops. Liu Bei joyfully took to leading the van and marched to the foot of the Daxing Hills, where they saw the rebels. The rebels wore their hair flying about their shoulders, and their foreheads were bound with yellow scarves.

When the two armies had been drawn up opposite each other, Liu Bei rode to the front, Guan Yu to his left, Zhang Fei to his right. Flourishing his whip, Liu Bei began to hurl reproaches at the rebels, crying, “O malcontents! Why not dismount and be bound?”

Their leader, Cheng Yuanzhi, full of rage, sent out a general, Deng Mao, to begin the battle. At once rode forward Zhang Fei, his Serpent Halberd poised to strike. One thrust, and Deng Mao rolled off his horse, pierced through the heart. At this, Cheng Yuanzhi himself whipped up his steed and rode forth with sword raised, ready to slay Zhang Fei. But Guan Yu swung up his ponderous Green-Dragon Saber and rode at Cheng Yuanzhi. At the sight, fear seized upon Cheng Yuanzhi, and before he could defend himself, the great saber fell, cutting him in half.



Two heroes new to war's alarms,
Ride boldly forth to try their arms.
Their doughty deeds three kingdoms tell,
And poets sing how these befell.



Their leader fallen, the rebels threw away their weapons and fled. The official soldiers dashed in among them. Many thousands surrendered, and the victory was complete. Thus this part of the rebellion was broken up.

Upon their return, Liu Yan personally met with the Three Brothers and distributed rewards. But the next day, letters came from Imperial Protector Gong Jing of Qingzhou Region saying that the rebels were laying siege to the chief city and it was near falling. Help was needed quickly.

“I will go,” said Liu Bei as soon as he heard the news. And he set out at once with his own soldiers, reinforced by a body of five thousand under Zhou Jing. The rebels, seeing help coming, at once attacked most fiercely. The relieving force, being comparatively small, could not prevail and retired some ten miles, where they made a camp.

“They are many and we but few,” said Liu Bei to his Brothers. “We can only beat them by superior strategy.”

So they prepared an ambush. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, each with a goodly party, went behind the hills, right and left, and there hid. When the gongs beat, they were to move out to support the main army.

These preparations made, the drums rolled noisily for Liu Bei to advance. The rebels also came forward. But Liu Bei suddenly retired. Thinking this was their chance, the rebels pressed forward and were led over the hills. Then suddenly, the gongs sounded for the ambush. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei poured out from right and left as Liu Bei faced around to meet the rebels. Under three-side attack, the rebels lost heavily and fled to the walls of Qingzhou City. But Imperial Protector Gong Jing led out an

armed body to attack them, and the rebels were entirely defeated and many slain. Qingzhou was no longer in danger.



Though fierce as tigers soldiers be,
Battles are won by strategy.
A hero comes; he gains renown,
Already destined for a crown.



After the celebrations in honor of victory were over, Commander Zhou Jing proposed a return to Youzhou.

But Liu Bei said, “We are informed that Imperial Commander Lu Zhi has been struggling with a horde of rebels led by Zhang Jue at Guangzong. Lu Zhi was once my teacher, and I want to go help him.”

So Liu Bei and Zhou Jing separated, and the Three Brothers, with their troops, made their way to Guangzong. They found Lu Zhi’s camp, were admitted to his presence, and declared the reason of their coming. The Commander received them with great joy, and they remained with him while he made his plans.

At that time, Zhang Jue’s one hundred fifty thousand troops and Lu Zhi’s fifty thousand troops had been facing each other. Neither side was having any success.

Lu Zhi said to Liu Bei, “I am able to surround these rebels here. But the other two brothers, Zhang Ba and Zhang Lian, are strongly entrenched opposite Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun at Yingchuan. I will give you a

thousand more troops, and with these you can go to find out what is happening, and we can then settle the moment for concerted attack.”

So Liu Bei set off and marched as quickly as possible to Yingchuan.

At that time, the imperial troops were attacking with success, and the rebels had retired upon Changshe. They had encamped among the thick grass.

Seeing this, Huangfu Song said to Zhu Jun, “The rebels are camping in the field. We can attack them by fire.”

So the Imperial Commanders bade every man cut a bundle of dry grass and laid an ambush. That night the wind blew a gale, and at the second watch they started a blaze. At the same time Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun’s troops attacked the rebels and set their camp on fire. The flames rose to the very heaven. The rebels were thrown into great confusion. There was no time to saddle horses or don armor; they fled in all directions.

The battle continued until dawn. Zhang Lian and Zhang Ba, with a group of flying rebels, found a way of escape. But suddenly a troop of soldiers with crimson banners appeared to oppose them. Their leader was a man of medium stature with small eyes and a long beard. He was Cao Cao, a Beijuo man, holding the rank of Cavalry Commander. His father was Cao Song, but he was not really a Cao. Cao Song had been born to the Xiahou family, but he had been brought up by Eunuch Cao Teng and had taken this family name.

As a young man Cao Cao had been fond of hunting and delighted in songs and dancing. He was resourceful and full of guile. An uncle, seeing the young fellow so unsteady, used to get angry with him and told his father of his misdeeds. His father remonstrated with him.

But Cao Cao made equal to the occasion. One day, seeing his uncle coming, he fell to the ground in a pretended fit. The uncle, alarmed, ran to tell his father, who came, and there was the youth in most perfect health.

“But your uncle said you were in a fit. Are you better?” said his father.

“I have never suffered from fits or any such illness,” said Cao Cao. “But I have lost my uncle’s affection, and he has deceived you.”

Thereafter, whatever the uncle might say of his faults, his father paid no heed. So the young man grew up licentious and uncontrolled.

A man of the time named Qiao Xuan said to Cao Cao, “Rebellion is at hand, and only a man of the greatest ability can succeed in restoring tranquility. That man is yourself.”

And He Yong of Nanyang said of him, “The dynasty of Han is about to fall. He who can restore peace is this man and only he.”

Cao Cao went to inquire his future of a wise man of Runan named Xu Shao. “What manner of man am I?” asked Cao Cao. The seer made no reply, and again and again, Cao Cao pressed the question.

Then Xu Shao replied, “In peace, you are an able subject; in chaos, you are a crafty hero!” Cao Cao greatly rejoiced to hear this.

Cao Cao graduated at twenty and earned a reputation of piety and integrity. He began his career as Commanding Officer in a county within the Capital District. In the four gates of the city he guarded, he hung up clubs of various sorts, and he would punish any breach of the law whatever the rank of the offender. Now an uncle of Eunuch Jian Shuo was found one night in the streets with a sword and was arrested. In due course, he was beaten. Thereafter, no one dared to offend again, and Cao Cao’s name became heard. Soon he became a magistrate of Dunqiu.

At the outbreak of the Yellow Scarves, Cao Cao held the rank of General and was given command of five thousand cavalry and infantry to help fight at Yingchuan. He just happened to fall in with the newly defeated rebels, whom he cut to pieces. Thousands were slain, and endless banners and drums and horses were captured, together with huge sums of money. However, Zhang Ba and Zhang Lian got away, and after a conference with Huangfu Song, Cao Cao went in pursuit of them.

Meanwhile, Liu Bei and his Brothers were hastening toward Yingchuan, when they heard the din of battle and saw flames rising high toward the sky. But they arrived too late for the fighting. They saw Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun to whom they told the intentions of Lu Zhi.

“The rebel power is quite broken here,” said the Commanders, “but they will surely make for Guangzong to join Zhang Jue. You can do nothing better than hasten back.”

The Three Brothers thus retraced their steps. Halfway along the road, they met a party of soldiers escorting a prisoner in a cage-cart. When they drew near, they saw that the prisoner was none other than Lu Zhi, the man they were going to help. Hastily dismounting, Liu Bei asked what had happened.

Lu Zhi explained, “I had surrounded the rebels and was on the point of smashing them, when Zhang Jue employed some of his supernatural powers and prevented my victory. The court sent down Eunuch Zhuo Feng to inquire into my failure, and that official demanded a bribe. I told him how hard-pressed we were and asked him where, under the circumstances, I could find a gift for him. He went away in wrath and reported that I was

hiding behind my ramparts and would not give battle and that I disheartened my army. So I was superseded by Dong Zhuo, and I have to go to the capital to answer the charge.”

This story put Zhang Fei into a rage. He was for slaying the escort and setting free Lu Zhi. But Liu Bei checked him. “The government will take the due course,” said Liu Bei. “You must not act hastily!” And the escort and the Three Brothers went two ways.

It was useless to continue on that road to Guangzong, so Guan Yu proposed to go back to Zhuo, and they retook the road. Two days later, they heard the thunder of battle behind some hills. Hastening to the top, they beheld the government soldiers suffering great loss, and they saw that the countryside was full of Yellow Scarves. On the rebels’ banners were the words, “ZHANG JUE THE LORD OF HEAVEN,” written large.

“We will attack this Zhang Jue!” said Liu Bei to his Brothers, and they galloped out to join in the battle.

Zhang Jue had worsted Dong Zhuo and was following up his advantage. He was in hot pursuit when the Three Brothers dashed into his army, threw his ranks into confusion, and drove him back fifteen miles. Then the Brothers returned with the rescued general to his camp.

“What offices have you?” asked Dong Zhuo, when he had leisure to speak to the Brothers.

“None,” replied they.

And Dong Zhuo treated them with disrespect. Liu Bei retired calmly, but Zhang Fei was furious.

“We have just rescued this menial in a bloody fight,” cried Zhang Fei,
“and now he is rude to us! Nothing but his death can slake my anger.”

Zhang Fei stamped toward Dong Zhuo’s tent, holding firmly a sharp sword.

As it was in olden time, so it is today,
The simple wight may merit well,
Officialdom holds sway;
Zhang Fei, the blunt and hasty,
Where can you find his peer?
But slaying the ungrateful would
Mean many deaths a year.

Dong Zhuo’s fate will be unrolled in later chapters.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act I

CHAPTER 2

ZHANG FEI WHIPS THE GOVERNMENT OFFICER; HE JIN PLOTS TO KILL THE EUNUCHS.

Dong Zhuo was born in the far northwest of Lintao in the West Valley Land. As the Governor of Hedong, Dong Zhuo himself was arrogant and overbearing. But the day he had treated Liu Bei with contumely would have been his last, had not Liu Bei and Guan Yu restrained their wrathful Brother Zhang Fei.

“Remember: he has the government commission,” said Liu Bei. “Who are we to judge and slay?”

“It is bitter to take orders from such a wretch. I would rather slay him! You may stay here if you wish to, but I will seek some other place,” said Zhang Fei.

“We three are one in life and in death; there is no parting for us. We will all go hence.” So spoke Liu Bei, and his Brother was satisfied.

All three set out and lost no time in traveling until they came to Zhu Jun, who received them well and accepted their aid in attacking Zhang Ba. By this time, Cao Cao had joined himself to Huangfu Song; they were trying to destroy Zhang Lian, and there was a great battle at Quyang.

Zhang Ba was commanding some eighty thousand troops. The rebel had led his army to a strong position in the rear of the hills. An attack being

decided upon, Liu Bei was the van leader. On the rebel side, a general of Zhang Ba, Gao Sheng, came out to offer battle. Liu Bei sent Zhang Fei to smite Gao Sheng. Out rode Zhang Fei at full speed, his spear ready-set. After a few bouts, Zhang Fei wounded Gao Sheng, who was unhorsed. At this, Liu Bei signaled the main army to advance.

Then Zhang Ba, while still mounted, loosened his hair, grasped his sword, and uttered his incantations. Thereupon began the wind to howl and the thunder to roll, while a dense, black cloud from the heavens settled upon the field. And therein seemed to be horsemen and footmen innumerable, who swept to attack the imperial troops. Fear came upon them, and Liu Bei led off his troops, but they were in disorder and returned defeated.

Zhu Jun and Liu Bei considered the matter. "Zhang Ba uses magic," said Zhu Jun. "Tomorrow, then, will I prepare counter-magic in the shape of the blood of slaughtered swine and goats. This blood shall be sprinkled upon their hosts from the precipices above by soldiers in ambush. Thus shall we be able to break the power of their shamanic art."

So it was done. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei took each a thousand troops and hid them on the high cliffs behind the hills, and they had a plentiful supply of the blood of swine and goats and all manner of filthy things. And so next day, when the rebels with fluttering banners and rolling drums came out to challenge, Liu Bei rode forth to meet them.

At the same moment that the armies met, again Zhang Ba began his magic and again the elements began to struggle together. Sand flew in clouds, pebbles were swept along the ground, black masses of vapor filled the sky, and rolling masses of foot and horse descended from on high. Liu Bei turned, as before, to flee, and the rebels rushed on.

But as they pressed through the hills, the trumpets blared, and the hidden soldiers exploded bombs, throwing down filth and spattered blood.

The masses of soldiers and horses in the air fluttered to the earth as fragments of torn paper, the wind ceased to blow, the thunder subsided, the sand sank, and the pebbles lay still upon the ground.

Zhang Ba quickly saw that his magic had been countered and turned to retire. Then he was attacked on the flanks by Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, and in rear by Liu Bei and Zhu Jun. The rebels were routed. Liu Bei, seeing from afar the banner of Zhang Ba the Lord of Earth, galloped toward it but only succeeded in wounding Zhang Ba with an arrow in the left arm. Wounded though he was, Zhang Ba got away into the city of Yangcheng, where he fortified himself and was besieged by Zhu Jun.

Scouts, sent out to get news of Huangfu Song, reported: "Commander Huangfu Song was very successful, while Dong Zhuo suffered many reverses. Therefore, the court put Huangfu Song in the latter's place. Zhang Jue had died before Huangfu Song's arrival. Zhang Lian had added his brother's army to his own, but no headway could be made against Huangfu Song, whose army gained seven successive victories. And Zhang Lian was slain at Quyang. Beside this, Zhang Jue's coffin was exhumed, the corpse beheaded, and the head, after exposure, was sent to Capital Luoyang. The common crowd had surrendered. For these services, Huangfu Song was promoted to General of the Flying Chariots and the Imperial Protector of Jizhou.

"Huangfu Song did not forget his friends. His first act after he attained power was to petition the Throne concerning the case of Lu Zhi, who was then restored to his former rank for his meritorious conduct. Cao Cao also received advancement for his services and is preparing to go to Jinan to his new post."

Hearing these things, Zhu Jun pressed harder yet upon Yangcheng, and the approaching break-up of the rebellion became evident. Then one of

Zhang Ba's officers, Yan Zheng, killed his leader and brought the head in token of submission. Thus rebellion in that part of the country was stamped out, and Zhu Jun made his report to the government.

However, the embers of the Yellow Scarves still smoldered. Three other rebels, Zhao Hong, Han Zhong, and Sun Zhong, gathered some thirty thousand rebels and began to murder and rob and burn, calling themselves the avengers of Master Zhang Jue.

The court commanded the successful Zhu Jun to lead his veteran and successful troops to destroy the rebels. He at once marched toward the city of Wancheng, which the rebels were holding. When Zhu Jun arrived, Han Zhong went to oppose him. Zhu Jun sent Liu Bei and his Brothers to attack the southwest corner of the city. Han Zhong at once led the best of his troops to defend the city. Meanwhile, Zhu Jun himself led two thousand armored horsemen to attack the opposite corner.

The rebels, thinking the city lost, abandoned the southwest and turned back into the city to help the defenders. Liu Bei pressed hotly in their rear, and they were utterly routed. They took refuge in the city, which was then invested. When famine pressed upon the besieged, they sent a messenger to offer surrender, but Zhu Jun refused the offer.

Said Liu Bei to Zhu Jun, "Seeing that the founder of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor, could welcome the submissive and receive the favorable, why reject these?"

"The conditions are different," replied Zhu Jun. "In those old days, disorder was universal and the people had no fixed lord. Wherefore, submission was welcomed and support rewarded to encourage people to come over. Now, the empire is united, and the Yellow Scarves are the only malcontents. To receive their surrender is not to encourage the good. To allow brigands, when successful, is to give way to every license, and to let

them surrender when they fail is to encourage brigandage. Your plan is not a good one.”

Liu Bei replied, “Not to let brigands surrender is well. But the city is surrounded as by an iron barrel. If the rebels’ request be refused, they will be desperate and fight to the death, and we can hardly withstand a myriad of such men. Moreover, in the city, there are many times that number, all doomed to death. Let us withdraw from one corner and only attack the opposite. They will all assuredly flee and have no desire to fight. We shall take them.”

Zhu Jun saw that the advice was good and followed it. As predicted, the rebels ran out, led by Han Zhong. The besiegers fell upon them as they fled, and Han Zhong was slain. The rebels scattered in all directions. But the other two rebel chieftains, Zhao Hong and Sun Zhong, came with large reinforcements, and as they appeared very strong, the imperial soldiers retired, and the new body of rebels reentered Wancheng.

Zhu Jun encamped three miles from the city and prepared to attack. Just then, there arrived a body of cavalry and infantry from the east. At the lead was a general with a broad open face, a body as an alert tiger’s, and a torso as a lofty bear’s. His name was Sun Jian. He was a native of Fuchun in the old state of Wu, a descendant of the famous Sun Zi the Strategist.

When he was seventeen, Sun Jian was with his father on the River Qiantang and saw a party of pirates, who had been plundering a merchant, dividing their booty on the river bank.

“We can capture them!” said he to his father. So, gripping his sword, he ran boldly up the bank and cried out to this side and that, as if he was

calling his men to come forth. This made the pirates believe the soldiers were on them and they fled, leaving their booty behind them. Sun Jian actually killed one of the pirates. In this way, he became known and was recommended for office.

Then, in collaboration with the local officials, he raised a band of one thousand and helped to quell the rebellion of one Xu Chang, who called himself the Sun Emperor and had ten thousand supporters. The rebel's son Xu Hao was also slain with his father. For this Sun Jian was commended by Imperial Protector Zang Min in a memorial to the Throne, and he received further promotion to the post of Magistrate of Yandu, then of Xuyi, and then of Xiapi.

When the Yellow Scarves' rebellion began, Sun Jian gathered together the youths of his village, some of the merchant class, and a troop of one thousand five hundred veteran soldiers, and took the field. Now he had reached the fighting area.

Zhu Jun welcomed Sun Jian gladly and ordered him to attack the south gate of Wancheng. The north and the west gates were simultaneously attacked by Liu Bei and Zhu Jun, but the east gate was left free to give the rebels a chance of exit.

Sun Jian was the first to mount the wall, and he cut down more than twenty rebels with his own sword. The rebels ran, but the leader Zhao Hong rode directly at Sun Jian with his spear ready to thrust. Sun Jian leaped down from the wall, snatched away the spear, and with it knocked Zhao Hong from the horse. Then Sun Jian, mounting Zhao Hong's horse, rode hither and thither, slaying as he went.

The rebels fled north. Meeting Liu Bei, they declined to fight and scattered. But Liu Bei drew his bow, fitted an arrow, and shot their leader Sun Zhong, who fell to the ground. The main army of Zhu Jun came, and

after tremendous slaughter, the rebels surrendered. Thus was peace brought to the ten counties about the Nanyang area.

Zhu Jun returned to Capital Luoyang, was promoted to the General of the Flying Cavalry, and received the governorship of Henan. He did not forget those who had helped him to win victory. Thus he reported the merits of Liu Bei and Sun Jian to the Throne.

Sun Jian, having influential friends and connections to support him, quickly got an appointment to a post of Commander of Changsha and went to assume the new office. But Liu Bei, in spite of Zhu Jun's memorial, waited in vain for preferment, and the Three Brothers became very sad.

Walking along one day in the capital, Liu Bei met a court official, Zhang Jun, to whom he related his services and told his sorrows. Zhang Jun was much surprised at this neglect and one day at court spoke to the Emperor about it.

Said he, "The Yellow Scarves rebelled because the eunuchs sold offices and bartered ranks. There was employment only for their friends, punishment only for their enemies. This led to rebellion. Wherefore, it would be well to slay the Ten Eunuchs and expose their heads and proclaim what had been done throughout the whole empire. Then reward the worthy. Thereby the land would be wholly tranquil."

But the eunuchs fiercely opposed this and said Zhang Jun was insulting the Emperor, and the Emperor bade the guards thrust Zhang Jun out. However, the eunuchs took counsel together and one said, "Surely someone who rendered some service against rebels resents being passed over."

So they caused a list of unimportant people to be prepared for preferment by and by. Among them was Liu Bei, who received the post of magistrate of the county of Anxi, to which he proceeded without delay after disbanding his army and sending them home to their villages. He retained two dozen or so as escort.

The Three Brothers reached Anxi, and soon the administration of the county was so reformed and the rule so wise that, in a month, there was no law-breaking. The Three Brothers lived in harmony, eating at the same table and sleeping on the same couch. But when Liu Bei was in public sessions or in company of others, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei would stand in attendance, were it even a whole day.

Four months after their arrival, there came out a general order for the reduction in the number of military officers holding civil posts, and Liu Bei began to fear that he would be among those thrown out. In due course, the inspecting official, Du Biao by name, arrived and was met at the boundary. But to the polite obeisance of Liu Bei, he made no return, save a wave of his whip as he sat on his horse. This made Guan Yu and Zhang Fei furious. But worse was to follow.

When the inspector arrived at his lodging, he took his seat on the dais, leaving Liu Bei standing below. After a long time, he addressed Liu Bei. "Magistrate, what are your origins?"

Liu Bei replied, "I am descended from Prince Sheng of Zhongshan. Since my first fight with the Yellow Scarves rebels at Zhuo County, I have been in some thirty battles, wherein I gained some trifling merit. My reward was this office."

“You lie about your descent, and your statement of services is false!” roared the inspector. “Now the court has ordered the reduction of your sort of low class and corrupt official.”

Liu Bei muttered to himself and withdrew. On his return to the magistracy, he took council with his secretaries.

“This pompous attitude only means the inspector wants a bribe,” said they.

“I have never wronged the people to the value of a single coin; where is a bribe to come from?”

Next day, the inspector had the minor officials before him and forced them to bear witness that their master had oppressed the people. Liu Bei, time after time, went to rebut this charge, but the doorkeepers drove him away and he could not enter.

Now Zhang Fei had been all day drowning his sorrow in wine and had drunk far too much. Calling for his horse he rode out past the lodging of the inspector, and at the gate saw a small crowd of white-haired people weeping bitterly. He asked why.

They said, “The inspector has compelled the underlings to bear false witness against our magistrate, with the desire to injure the virtuous Liu Bei. We came to beg mercy for him but are not permitted to enter. Moreover, we have been beaten by the doorkeepers.”

This provoked the irascible and half intoxicated Zhang Fei to fury. His eyes opened wide until they became circles; he ground his teeth. In a moment, he was off his steed, had forced his way past the scared doorkeepers into the building, and was in the rear apartments. There, he saw Imperial Inspector Du Biao sitting on high with the official underlings in bonds at his feet.

“Oppressor of the people, robber!” cried Zhang Fei. “Do you know me?”

But before the inspector could reply, Zhang Fei had had him by the hair and had dragged him down. Another moment, he was outside and firmly lashed to the hitching post in front of the building. Then, breaking off a switch from a willow tree, Zhang Fei gave his victim a severe thrashing, only staying his hand when the tenth switch was too short to strike with.

Liu Bei was sitting alone, communing with his sorrow, when he heard a shouting before his door. He asked what the matter was.

They told him, “General Zhang Fei has bound somebody to a post and was thrashing him!”

Hastily going outside, Liu Bei saw who the unhappy victim was and asked Zhang Fei the reason.

“If we do not beat this sort of wretch to death, what may we expect?” said Zhang Fei.

“Noble Sir, save me!” cried the inspector.

Now Liu Bei had always been kindly and gracious, wherefore he bade his Brother release the officer and go on his way.

Then Guan Yu came up, saying, “Brother, after your magnificent services, you only got this petty post, and even here, you have been insulted by this fellow. A thorn bush is no place for a phoenix. Let us slay this fellow, leave here, and go home till we can evolve a bigger scheme.”

Liu Bei contented himself with hanging the official seal about the inspector’s neck, saying, “If I hear that you injure the people, I will assuredly kill you. I now spare your life, and I return to you the seal. We are going.”

The inspector went to the Governor of Dingzhou and complained, and orders were issued for the arrest of the Brothers, but they got away to Daizhou and sought refuge with Liu Hu, who sheltered them because of Liu Bei's noble birth.

By this time, the Ten Regular Attendants had everything in their hands, and they put to death all who did not stand with them. From every officer who had helped to put down the rebels, they demanded presents; if these were not forthcoming, he was removed from office. Imperial Commanders Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun both fell victim to these intrigues and were deprived from offices, while on the other hand, the eunuchs received the highest honors and rewards. Thirteen eunuchs were ennobled, including Zhao Zhong, who was added to the rank of General of the Flying Cavalry. The government grew worse and worse, and everyone was irritated.

Rebellions broke out in Changsha led by Ou Xing, and in Yuyang led by Zhang Ju and Zhang Chun. Memorials were sent up in number as snowflakes in winter, but the Ten suppressed them all.

One day, the Emperor was at a feast in one of the gardens with the Ten, when Court Counselor Liu Tao suddenly appeared showing very great distress. The Emperor asked what the matter was.

“Sire, how can you be feasting with these when the empire is at the last gasp?” said Liu Tao.

“All is well,” said the Emperor. “Where is anything wrong?”

Said Liu Tao, “Robbers swarm on all sides and plunder the cities. And all is the fault of the Ten Eunuchs who sell offices and injure the people, oppress loyal officials and deceive their superiors. All virtuous ones have

left the services and returned to their places. Misfortune is before our very eyes!”

At this, the eunuchs pulled off their hats and threw themselves at their master’s feet. “If Minister Liu Tao disapproves of us,” they said, “we are in danger. We pray that our lives be spared and we may go to our farms. We yield our property to help defray military expenses.” And they wept bitterly.

The Emperor turned angrily to Liu Tao, saying, “You also have servants: Why can’t you bear with mine?” And thereupon, the Emperor called to the guards to eject Liu Tao and put him to death.

Liu Tao cried aloud, “My death matters nothing. The pity is that Han Dynasty, after four centuries of reign, is falling fast!”

The guards hustled him away and were just about to carry out the Emperor’s order when a minister stopped them, shouting, “Strike not! Wait till I have spoken with His Majesty.”

It was the Minister of the Interior, Chen Dan. He went in to the Emperor, to whom he said, “For what fault is Counselor Liu Tao to be put to death?”

“He has vilified my servants and has insulted me,” said the Emperor.

“All the empire would eat the flesh of the eunuchs if they could, and yet, Sire, you respect them as if they were your parents. They have no merit, but they are created nobles. Moreover, Feng Xu was in league with the Yellow Scarves. Unless Your Majesty looks to it, the state will crumble!”

“There was no proof against Feng Xu,” replied the Emperor. “As for the Ten Eunuchs, are there none faithful among them?”

Chen Dan beat his forehead on the steps of the throne and did not desist from remonstrance. Then the Emperor grew angry and commanded

his removal and imprisonment with Liu Tao. That night, Liu Tao and Chen Dan were murdered.

Then, the eunuchs sent a forged edict to Sun Jian making him Governor of Changsha, with orders to suppress the rebellion of Ou Xing. In less than two months, Sun Jian reported the county all tranquil. For this, he was created Lord of Wucheng.

Further, Liu Yu was made Imperial Protector of Youzhou to move against Yuyang and suppress Zhang Ju and Zhang Chun. Liu Hu of Daizhou recommended Liu Bei to Liu Yu. Liu Yu welcomed Liu Bei and gave him rank of Commander and sent him against the rebels. He fought with and worsted them and entirely broke their spirit. Zhang Chun was cruel, and his leaders turned against him. One of his officers then slew him and brought in his head, after which the others submitted. The other leader Zhang Ju saw that all was lost and killed himself.

Yuyang being now tranquil, Liu Bei's services were reported to the Throne, and he received full pardon for the insult to the Imperial Inspector. He was made Deputy Magistrate of Xiami, then Commanding Officer of Gaotang. Then Gongsun Zan praised Liu Bei's former services, and he was promoted to Magistrate of Pingyuan. This place was very prosperous, and Liu Bei recovered something of his old manner before the days of adversity. Liu Yu also received preferment and was promoted to Grand Commander.

In the summer of the sixth year of Central Stability (AD 189), Emperor Ling became seriously ill and summoned He Jin into the Palace to arrange for the future. He Jin had sprung from a humble family of butchers, but his sister had become a concubine of rank and borne a son to the Emperor,

named Liu Bian. After this, she became Empress He, and He Jin became the powerful Regent Marshal.

The Emperor had also greatly loved a beautiful girl, Lady Wang, who had borne him a son named Liu Xie. Empress He had poisoned Lady Wang from jealousy, and the baby had been given into the care of Empress Dong, who was the mother of Emperor Ling.

Lady Dong was the wife of Liu Chang, Lord of Jiedu. As time went on and the Emperor Huan had no son of his own, he adopted the son of Liu Chang, who succeeded as the Emperor Ling. After his accession, Emperor Ling had taken his own mother into the Palace to live and had conferred upon her the title of Empress Dowager.

Empress Dong had always tried to persuade her son to name Liu Xie as the Heir Apparent, and in fact the Emperor greatly loved the boy and was disposed to do as his mother desired.

When his end was near, one of the eunuchs, Jian Shuo, said, "If Liu Xie is to succeed, He Jin must be killed to prevent any countermeasure."

The Emperor saw this too. And he summoned He Jin to come to him. But at the very gate of the Forbidden City, He Jin was warned of his danger by Commander Pan Yin who said, "This must be a trap of Jian Shuo to destroy you!"

He Jin rushed back to his quarters and called many of the ministers to his side, and they met to consider how to put the eunuchs to death.

At this assembly a man spoke against the plot, "The influence of the eunuchs dates back a century and a half, during the reigns of Emperors Chong and Zhi. It has spread like a noxious weed in all directions. How can we hope to destroy it? Above all, keep this plot secret, or our whole clans will be exterminated."

He Jin eyed down and saw General of Military Standards Cao Cao. He Jin was very angry at this speech and cried, “What do inferiors like you know of the ways of government?”

And in the midst of the confusion Pan Yin came to say: “The Emperor is no more. The eunuchs have decided to keep the death a secret and forge a command to the Regent Marshal to come into the Palace to settle the succession. Meanwhile, to prevent trouble, they have inscribed the name of Prince Xian on the roll.” And as Pan Yin finished speaking, the edict arrived summoning He Jin.

“The matter for the moment is to set up the rightful heir,” said Cao Cao. “We can deal with the traitors later.”

“Who dare to join me in supporting the rightful heir: Prince Bian?” asked He Jin, the Regent Marshal.

At once, one stood forward, crying, “Give me five thousand veterans, and we will break into the Palace, set up the true heir, slay the eunuchs, and sweep clean the government! Then peace will come to the empire.” The energetic speaker was Yuan Shao, son of the former Minister of the Interior Yuan Feng and nephew of Imperial Guardian Yuan Wei. Yuan Shao then held the rank of Imperial Commander.

He Jin mustered five thousand royal guards. Yuan Shao put on complete armor and took command. He Jin, supported by He Yong, Xun You, Zheng Tai, and more than thirty other ministers and high-ranking officials, went into the Palace. In the hall where lay the coffin of the late Emperor, they placed Liu Bian on the throne.

After the ceremony was over and all had bowed before the new Emperor, Yuan Shao went in to arrest Eunuch Jian Shuo. Jian Shuo in terror fled into the Palace garden and hid among the shrubs, where he was

discovered and murdered by Guo Sheng, one of the other Ten Eunuchs. The guards under Jian Shuo's command all surrendered.

Yuan Shao said, "Their gangs have broken. The most opportune moment is now to slay all the eunuchs!"

But Zhang Rang and the eunuchs of the Ten scented the danger and rushed to see Empress He.

They said, "The originator of the plan to injure your brother was Jian Shuo: only he was concerned and no other. Now the Regent Marshal, on Yuan Shao's advice, wishes to slay every one of us. We implore your pity, O Your Majesty!"

"Fear not!" said Empress He, whose son had just become Emperor. "I will protect you." She sent for her brother, and said, "You and I are of lowly origin, and we owe our good fortune to the eunuchs. The misguided Jian Shuo is now dead, and need you really put all the others to death as Yuan Shao advises?"

And He Jin obeyed her wish. He explained to his party, saying, "The real offender, Jian Shuo, has met his fate, and his clan will be punished. But we need not exterminate the whole party nor injure his colleagues."

"Slay them, root and branch," cried Yuan Shao, "or they will ruin you!"

"I have decided," said He Jin, coldly. "Say no more."

Within a few days, He Jin became Chair of the Secretariat, and his associates received high offices.

Now, Empress Dong summoned the eunuch Zhang Rang and his party to a council.

Said she, "It was I who first brought forward the sister of He Jin. Today, her son is on the throne, and all the officials are her friends, and her influence is enormous. What can we do?"

Zhang Rang replied, "Your Highness should administer the state from 'behind the veil'; create the late Emperor's son Liu Xie a prince; give your brother, the Imperial Uncle Dong Chong, a high rank, and place him over the army; and use us. That will do it."

Empress Dong approved. Next day, she held a court and issued an edict in the sense proposed. She made Liu Xie Prince of Chenliu and Dong Chong General of the Flying Cavalry, and she allowed the eunuchs again to participate in state affairs.

When Empress He saw this, she prepared a banquet to which she invited her rival Empress Dong.

In the middle of the feast, when all were well warmed with wine, Empress He rose and offered a cup to her guest, saying, "It is not fitting that we two should meddle in state affairs. In the beginning of the Han Dynasty, when Empress Lu laid hands upon the government, all her clans were put to death. We ought to remain content, immured in our palaces, and leave state affairs to the state officials. That would be well for the country, and I trust you will act thus."

But Empress Dong only got angry, saying, "You poisoned Lady Wang out of jealousy. Now, relying upon the fact that your son sits on the throne and that your brother is powerful, you speak these wild words. I will command that your brother be beheaded, and that can be done as easily as I turn my hand!"

Empress He in her turn became wroth and said, "I tried to persuade you with fair words. Why get so angry?"

"You low-born daughter of a butcher, what do you know of offices?" cried Empress Dong.

And the quarrel waxed hot.

The eunuchs persuaded the ladies to retire. But in the night, Empress He summoned her brother into the Palace and told him what had occurred. He went out and took counsel with the principal officers of state. Next morning, a court was held and a memorial was presented, saying:

"Empress Dong, being the foster mother of Liu Xie, Prince of Chenliu, a regional prince—only a collateral—cannot properly occupy any part of the Palace. She is to be removed into her original fief of Hejian and is to depart immediately."

And while they sent an escort to remove Empress Dong, a strong guard was placed about the Imperial Uncle Dong Chong's dwelling. They took away his seal of office, and he, knowing this was the end, killed himself in his private apartments. His dependents, who wailed his death, were driven off by the guards.

The eunuchs Zhang Rang and Duan Gui, having lost their patroness, sent large gifts to He Jin's younger brother, He Miao, and his mother, Lady Wuyang, and thus got them to put in a good word to Empress He so as to gain her protection. And so they gained favor once more at court.

In the sixth month of that year, the secret emissaries of He Jin poisoned Empress Dong in her residence in the country. Her remains were brought to the capital and buried in Wen Tombs. He Jin feigned illness and did not attend the funeral.

Commander Yuan Shao went one day to see He Jin, saying, “The two eunuchs, Zhang Rang and Duan Gui, are spreading the report outside that you have caused the death of the late empress and are aiming at the throne. This is an excuse for you to destroy them. Do not spare them this time, or you will pay like Dou Wu and Chen Fan, who in the previous reign, missed their chance because the secret had not been kept, and they paid by their own deaths. Now, you and your brother have many commanders and officers behind, so that the destruction of the eunuchs can be but an ease. It is a heaven-sent opportunity. Delay no further!”

But He Jin replied, “Let me think it over.”

He Jin’s servants overheard the discussion and secretly informed the intended victims, who sent further gifts to the younger brother, He Miao.

Corrupted by these, He Miao went in to speak with his sister Empress He and said, “The General is the chief support of the new Emperor, yet he is not gracious and merciful but thinks wholly of slaughter. If he slays the eunuchs without cause, it may bring about revolution.”

Soon after, He Jin entered and told her of his design to put the eunuchs to death.

She argued with him, “Those officials look after palace affairs and are old servants. To kill the old servants just after the death of their master would appear disrespectful to the dynasty’s ancestral temple.” And as He Jin was of a vacillating mind, he murmured assent and left her.

“What about it?” said Yuan Shao on meeting him.

“She will not consent. What can be done?”

“Call up an army and slay them. It is imperative. Never mind her consent!”

“That is an excellent plan,” said He Jin. And he sent orders all round to march soldiers to the capital.

But Secretary Chen Lin objected, “Nay! Do not act without due consideration. The proverb says, ‘To cover the eyes and snatch at swallows is to fool oneself.’ If in so small a matter you cannot attain your wish, what of great affairs? Now, by virtue of the Emperor and with the army under your hand, you are like prancing tiger and soaring dragon: you may do as you please. To use such enormous powers against the eunuchs would bring victory as easily as lighting up a furnace to burn a hair. You only need to act promptly: use your powers and smite at once, and all the empire will be with you. But to summon forces to the capital, to gather many bold warlords into one spot, each with different schemes, is to turn our weapons against our own person, to place ourselves in the power of another. Nothing but failure can come of it, and havoc will ensue.”

“The view of a mere bookworm,” said He Jin with a smile.

Then one of those about He Jin suddenly clapped his hands, laughing, “Solving this issue is as easy as turning over one’s hand! Why so much talk?”

The speaker was Cao Cao.

Wouldst thou withdraw wicked people from thy
prince’s side,
Then seek counsel of the wise people of the state.

What Cao Cao said will be disclosed in later chapters.



END OF ACT I

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT II:

CRUELTY, VENOM, AND FOUL DESIGN:
THE RISE AND FALL OF DONG ZHUO

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act II

CHAPTER 3

IN WENMING GARDEN, DONG ZHUO DENOUNCES DING YUAN; WITH
RED HARE, LI SU BRIBES LU BU.

What Cao Cao said was this: "The eunuch evil is of very old standing, but the real cause of the present trouble is in the improper influence allowed them by the emperors and the misplaced favoritism they have enjoyed. But a jailer would be ample force to employ against this kind of evil, and getting rid of the main culprits is quite enough. Why increase confusion by summoning troops from the regions? Any desire to slay all of them will speedily become known, and the plan will fail."

"Then, Cao Cao, you have some scheme of your own to further," said He Jin with a sneer.

Cao Cao left the meeting, proclaiming, "The one who throws the world into chaos is He Jin!"

Then He Jin sent swift, secret letters far and wide to several bases.

It must be recalled that Dong Zhuo had failed in his attempt to destroy the Yellow Scarves rebellion. He would have been punished if he had not bribed the Ten Eunuchs heavily for their protection. Later, through connections in the capital, he obtained rapid promotions from General to General of the Front Army, to Lord of Aoxiang, to Imperial Protector in the

western region of Xizhou and Commander of an army of two hundred thousand troops.

But Dong Zhuo was treacherous and disloyal at heart. So when he received the summons to the capital, he rejoiced greatly and lost no time in obeying it. He left a son-in-law, Imperial Commander Niu Fu, to look after the affairs of Xizhou and set out for Luoyang. Dong Zhuo took with him a huge army and four generals—Li Jue, Guo Si, Zhang Ji, and Fan Chou.

Dong Zhuo's adviser and son-in-law, Li Ru, said, "Though a formal summons has come, there are many obscurities in it. It would be well to send up a memorial stating plainly our aims and intentions. Then, we can proceed."

So Dong Zhuo composed something like this:

"Thy servant knows that the continual rebellions owe their origin to Zhang Rang and the Regular Attendants of the Inner Bureau, who act counter to all recognized precepts. Now to stop the ebullition of a pot, the best way is to withdraw the fire; to cut out an abscess, though painful, is better than to nourish the evil. I have dared undertake a military advance on the capital, with thy permission, and now pray that Zhang Rang and the other eunuchs be removed for the happiness of the dynasty and of the empire."

He Jin read this memorial and showed it to his partisans.

Then said Minister Zheng Tai, "A fierce wild beast: if he comes, his prey will be humans!"

He Jin replied, "You are too timorous: you are unequal to great schemes."

But Lu Zhi also said, "Long have I known this man. In appearance innocent, he is a very wolf at heart. Let him in, and calamity enters with him. Stop him, do not let him come, and thus will you avoid upheaval."

He Jin was obstinate, and both Zheng Tai and Lu Zhi gave up their posts and retired, as did more than half the ministers of state, while He Jin sent a warm welcome to Dong Zhuo, who soon camped at Shengchi Lake and stationed there without further action.

Zhang Rang and the eunuchs knew that this move was directed against them and said, "This is He Jin's plot. If we do not strike first, our whole clans shall be exterminated."

So they hid a band of fifty armed ruffians at the Gate of Grand Virtue in the Palace of Happiness, where the Empress lived, then they went in to see her. They said, "The General, feigning to act under command, has called up armies to the capital to destroy us. We pray you, Your Majesty, pity and save us!"

"Go to the General and confess your faults," said the Empress.

"If we did, then should we be cut to mincemeat! Rather summon the General into your presence and command him to cease. If he will not, then we pray but die in your presence."

Empress He issued the requisite command.

He Jin was just going to her when Secretary Chen Lin advised him not to enter, saying, "The eunuchs are certainly behind the order and mean your harm."

But He Jin could only see the command of the Empress and was oblivious to all else. Said he, "Clearly, this is an edict from the Empress. What harm?"

“Our plot is no longer a secret,” said Yuan Shao. “Still, you may go if you are ready to fight your way in.”

“Get the eunuchs out first!” said Cao Cao.

“Silly children!” said He Jin. “What can they do against the man who holds the forces of the empire in his palm?”

Yuan Shao said, “If you will go, then we will come as a guard, just as a precaution.”

Whereupon both Yuan Shao and Cao Cao chose five hundred of the best men under their command, at whose head they placed Yuan Shu, a brother of Yuan Shao. Yuan Shu, clad in mail, drew up his troops outside the Forbidden City’s entrance, while Yuan Shao and Cao Cao, holding swords, went as escort.

When He Jin neared the Palace of Happiness, the officers from the Inner Bureau said, “The orders are to admit the Regent Marshal and none other.”

So the escort was detained outside. He Jin went in proudly. At the Gate of Grand Virtue, he was met by Zhang Rang and Duan Gui, and their followers quickly closed in around him. He Jin began to feel alarmed.

Then, Zhang Rang in a harsh voice began to revile him: “What crime had Empress Dong committed that she should have been put to death? And when the Mother of the Country was buried, who feigned sickness and did not attend? We raised you and your paltry, huckstering family to all the dignity and wealth you have, and this is your gratitude! You would slay us. You call us sordid and dirty: who is the cleaner?”

He Jin was panic-stricken and looked about for a way to escape, but all gates had been shut. The eunuchs closed him in, and then the assassins appeared and cut He Jin into halves.



Closing the days of the Hans, and the years of their
rule were near spent,
Stupid and tactless was He Jin, yet stood he highest in
office,
Many were they who advised him, but he was deaf as
he heard not,
Wherefore fell he a victim under the swords of the
eunuchs.



So He Jin died. Yuan Shao and Cao Cao waited long. By and by, impatient
at the delay, they called through the gate, “Thy carriage awaits, O General!”

In reply, the head of He Jin was flung over the wall. A decree was
proclaimed:

“He Jin has contemplated treachery and therefore has been slain!
It pardons his adherents.”

Yuan Shao shouted, “The eunuchs have slain the High Minister. Let
those who will slay this wicked party come and help me!”

Then one of He Jin’s generals, Wu Kuang, set fire to the gate. Yuan
Shu, at the head of his guards, burst in and fell to slaying the eunuchs
without regard to age or rank. Yuan Shao and Cao Cao broke into the inner
part of the Palace. Four of the eunuchs—Zhao Zhong, Cheng Kuang, Xia
Yun, and Guo Sheng—fled to the Blue Flower Lodge, where they were
hacked to pieces. Fire raged, destroying the buildings.

Four of the Ten Regular Attendants—Zhang Rang, Duan Gui, Cao Jie, and Hou Lan—led by Zhang Rang carried off the Empress, Emperor Bian, and Prince Xian of Chenliu toward the North Palace.

Lu Zhi, since he had resigned office, was at home, but hearing of the revolution in the Palace he donned his armor, took his spear, and prepared to fight. He saw Eunuch Duan Gui hurrying the Empress along and called out, “You rebel, how dare you abduct the Empress?”

The eunuch fled. The Empress leaped out of a window and was taken to a place of safety.

General Wu Kuang burst into one of the inner halls where he found He Miao, sword in hand. “You also were in the plot to slay your own brother,” cried Wu Kuang. “You shall die with the others!”

“Let us kill the plotter against his elder brother!” cried many.

He Miao looked around: his enemies hemmed him in on every side. He was hacked to pieces.

Yuan Shu bade his soldiers scatter and seek out all the families of the eunuchs, sparing none. In that slaughter, many beardless men were killed in error.

Cao Cao set himself to extinguishing the fires. He then begged Empress He to undertake the direction of affairs, and soldiers were sent to pursue Zhang Rang and rescue the young Emperor and the young Prince of Chenliu.

Meanwhile, Zhang Rang and Duan Gui had hustled away the Emperor and the Prince. They burst through the smoke and fire and traveled without stopping till they reached the Beimang Hills. It was then the third watch.

They heard a great shouting behind them and saw soldiers in pursuit. Their leader, Min Gong, a commander in Henan, was shouting, "Traitors, stop, stop!"

Zhang Rang, seeing that he was lost, jumped into the river, where he was drowned.

The two boys, ignorant of the meaning of all this confusion and terrified out of their senses, dared not utter a cry. They crept in among the rank grass on the river bank and hid. The soldiers scattered in all directions but failed to find them. So they remained till the fourth watch, shivering with cold from the drenching dew and very hungry. They lay down in the thick grass and wept in each other's arms, silently, lest anyone should discover them.

"This is no a place to stay in," said Prince Xian. "We must find some way out."

So the two children knotted their clothes together and managed to crawl up the bank. They were in a thicket of thorn bushes, and it was quite dark. They could not see any path. They were in despair when, all at once, millions of fireflies sprang up all about them and circled in the air in front of the Emperor.

"God is helping us," said Prince Xian.

They followed whither the fireflies led and gradually got onto a road. They walked till their feet were too sore to go further, when, seeing a heap of straw near the road, they crept to it and lay down.

This heap of straw was close to a farm house. In the night, as the farmer was sleeping, he saw in a vision two bright red suns drop behind his dwelling. Alarmed by the portent, he hastily dressed and went forth to look

about him. Then he saw a bright light shooting up from a heap of straw. He hastened thither and then saw two youths lying behind it.

“To what household do you belong, young gentlemen?” asked the farmer.

The Emperor was too frightened to reply, but his companion said, “He is the Emperor. There was a revolution in the Forbidden City, and we ran away. I am his brother, Prince of Chenliu.”

The farmer bowed again and again and said, “My name is Cui Yi. My brother Cui Lie is the former Minister of the Interior. My brother was disgusted with the behavior of the eunuchs and so resigned and hid away here.”

The two lads were taken into the farm, and their host, on his knees, served them with refreshment.

It has been said that Min Gong had gone in pursuit of Eunuch Duan Gui. By and by, Min Gong overtook Duan Gui and cried, “Where is the Emperor?”

“He disappeared! I do not know where he is!”

Min Gong slew Duan Gui and hung the bleeding head from his horse’s neck. Then he sent his troops searching in all directions, and he rode off by himself on the same quest.

Presently, he came to the farm. Cui Yi, seeing what hung on his horse’s neck, questioned him and, satisfied with his story, led him to the Emperor. The meeting was affecting. All were moved to tears.

“The state cannot be without its ruler,” said Min Gong. “I pray Your Majesty return to the city.”

At the farm, they had but one sorry nag, and this they saddled for the Emperor. The young Prince was taken on Min Gong's charger. And thus they left the farm. Not beyond one mile from the farm, they fell in with other officials and several hundred guards and soldiers, making up an imposing cavalcade. In the cavalcade were Wang Yun, Minister of the Interior; Yang Biao, Grand Commander; Chunyu Qiong, Commander of the Left Army; Zhao Meng, Commander of the Right Army; Bao Xin, Commander of the Rear Army; and Yuan Shao, Commander of the Center Army. Tears were shed freely as the ministers met their Emperor.

A man was sent on in front to the capital to expose there the head of Eunuch Duan Gui.

As soon as they could, they placed the Emperor on a better steed, and the young Prince had a horse to himself. Thus, the Emperor returned to Luoyang, and so it happened after all as the street children's ditty ran:

Though the emperor doesn't rule, though the prince no
office fills,
Yet a brilliant cavalcade comes along from Beimang
Hills.

The cavalcade had not proceeded far, when they saw coming towards them a large body of soldiers with fluttering banners hiding the sun and raising a huge cloud of dust. The officials turned pale, and the Emperor was greatly alarmed. Yuan Shao rode out in advance.

"Who are you?" said Yuan Shao.

From under the shade of an embroidered banner rode out a leader, saying, "Do you have the Emperor?"

The Emperor was too panic-stricken to respond, but the Prince of Chenliu rode to the front and cried, "Who are you?"

"Dong Zhuo, Imperial Protector of Xizhou Region."

"Have you come to protect the Chariot or to steal it?" said Prince Xian.

"I have come to protect," said Dong Zhuo.

"If that is so, the Emperor is here: why do you not dismount?"

Dong Zhuo hastily dismounted and made obeisance on the left of the road. Then Prince Xian spoke graciously to him.

From first to last, the Prince had carried himself most perfectly so that Dong Zhuo in his heart admired his behavior, and then arose the first desire to set aside the Emperor in favor of the Prince of Chenliu.

They reached the Palace the same day, and there was an affecting interview with Empress He. But when they had restored order in the Palace, the Imperial Hereditary Seal, the special seal of the Emperor, was missing.

Dong Zhuo camped without the walls, but every day, he was to be seen in the streets with an escort of mailed soldiers so that the common people were in a state of constant trepidation. He also went in and out of the Palace careless of all the rules of propriety.

Commander of the Rear Army Bao Xin spoke of Dong Zhuo's behavior to Yuan Shao, saying, "This man harbors some evil design and should be removed."

"Nothing can be done till the government is more settled," said Yuan Shao.

Then Bao Xin saw Minister of the Interior Wang Yun and asked what he thought. "Let us talk it over," was the reply.

Bao Xin said no more but he left the capital and retired to the Taishan Mountains.

Dong Zhuo induced the soldiers of the two brothers He Jin and He Miao to join his command, and privately spoke to his adviser Li Ru about deposing the Emperor in favor of the Prince of Chenliu.

"The government is really without a head. There can be no better time than this to carry out your plan. Delay will spoil all. Tomorrow, assemble the officials in the Wenming Garden and address them on the subject. Put all opponents to death, and your prestige is settled." So spoke Li Ru, and the words pleased Dong Zhuo mightily.

So the next day, Dong Zhuo spread a feast and invited many guests. As all the officers went in terror of him, no one dared be absent. Dong Zhuo himself rode up to the garden last of all and took his place with his sword girded on. When the wine had gone round several times, Dong Zhuo stopped the service and the music and began to speak.

"I have something to say. Listen quietly all of you!" All turned towards him. "The emperor is lord of all. If he lacks dignity and behaves in an unseemly manner, he is no fitting inheritor of the ancestral prerogatives. He who is now on the throne is a weakling, inferior to the Prince of Chenliu in intelligence and love of learning. The Prince is in every way fitted for the throne. I desire to depose the Emperor and set up the Prince in his place. What think you?"

The assembly listened in perfect silence, none daring at first to utter a word of dissent. But one dared, for suddenly a guest stood up in his place, smote the table, and cried, "No! No! Who are you that you dare utter such

bold words? The Emperor is son of the late Emperor and has done no wrong. Why then should he be deposed? Are you a rebel?"

The speaker was Ding Yuan, Imperial Protector of Bingzhou. Dong Zhuo glared at Ding Yuan, roaring, "There is life for those who are with me, death for those against!"

Dong Zhuo drew his sword and made for the objector. But the watchful Li Ru had noticed standing behind Ding Yuan a particularly dangerous-looking henchman of his, who was now handling his halberd threateningly and whose eyes were blazing with anger.

So Li Ru hastily interposed, saying, "But this is the banquet chamber, and state affairs should be left outside. The matters can be fully discussed tomorrow."

His fellow guests persuaded Ding Yuan to leave, and after his departure Dong Zhuo said, "Is what I said just and reasonable?"

"You are mistaken, Illustrious Sir," said Lu Zhi. "Of-old Emperor Tai Jia of the Shang Dynasty was unenlightened. Wherefore, the sage Minister Yi Yin immured him in the Tong Palace till he reformed. Later, the Prince of Changyi ascended the throne, and in twenty-seven days, he committed more than three thousand categorical faults. Wherefore, Regent Marshal Huo Guang declared in the ancestral temple that the Prince of Changyi was deposed.

"Our present Emperor is young, but he is intelligent, benevolent, and wise. He has not committed a single fault. You, Sir, are an Imperial Protector of a frontier region and not a metropolitan official and have had no experience in state administration. Neither have you the pure intentions of Yi Yin and Huo Guang which qualified their actions. The Teacher said: 'Only with Yi Yin's purpose can one act like Yi Yin. Otherwise, such a deed is treason.'"

Dong Zhuo angrily drew his sword to slay the bold Lu Zhi, but two other officials remonstrated. “Minister Lu Zhi is the cynosure of the whole country, and his violent death would stir the hearts of all people!” said Court Counselors Cai Yong and Peng Bo. Dong Zhuo then stayed his hand.

Then said Wang Yun, “A great question like the deposition and substitution of emperors is not one to be decided after a wine party. Let it be put off till another time.”

So the guests dispersed. Dong Zhuo stood at the gate with drawn sword, watching them depart. Standing thus, Dong Zhuo noticed a spearman galloping to and fro on a fiery steed and asked Li Ru who that was.

“That is Lu Bu, the adopted son of Ding Yuan. You must keep out of his way, my lord.”

Dong Zhuo went inside the gate so that he could not be seen. But next day, they reported to him that Ding Yuan had come out of the city with a small army and was challenging to a battle. Dong Zhuo, with his army, went forth to accept the challenge. And the two armies were drawn up in proper array.

Lu Bu was a conspicuous figure in the forefront. His hair was arranged under a handsome headdress of gold, and he had donned an embroidered thousand-flower fighting robe, a pheasant-tailed helmet, and breast plate, and round his waist was a gleaming, jade belt with a lion’s-head clasp. With spear set, he rode close behind his master Ding Yuan.

Ding Yuan, riding forth, pointing his finger at Dong Zhuo, began to revile him. “Unhappy indeed was this state when the eunuchs became so powerful that the people were as if trodden into the mire under their feet.

Now you, devoid of the least merit, dare to talk of deposing the rightful emperor and setting up another. This is to desire rebellion and no less!”

Dong Zhuo could not reply, for Lu Bu, eager for the fight, rode straight at him. Dong Zhuo fled, and Ding Yuan’s army continued after. The battle went in Ding Yuan’s favor, and the beaten troops retired ten miles and made another camp. Here, Dong Zhuo called his officers to a council.

“This Lu Bu is a marvel,” said Dong Zhuo. “If he were only on my side, I would defy the whole world!”

At this, a man advanced saying, “Be content, O my lord! I am a fellow villager of his and know him well: He is valorous, but not crafty; he will let go principles when he sees advantages. With this little, blarneying tongue of mine, I can persuade him to put up his hands and come over to your side.”

Dong Zhuo was delighted and gazed admiringly at the speaker. It was Li Su, a general in the Imperial Tiger Army. “What arguments will you use with him?” asked Dong Zhuo.

“You have a fine horse, Red Hare, one of the best ever bred. I must have this steed, and gold and pearls to win his heart. Then will I go and persuade him. He will certainly abandon Ding Yuan’s service for yours.”

“What think you?” said Dong Zhuo to his adviser Li Ru.

“One cannot grudge a horse to win an empire,” was the reply.

So they gave Li Su what he demanded—a thousand ounces of gold, ten strings of beautiful pearls, a jeweled belt, and Red Hare—and these accompanied Li Su on his visit to his fellow villager.

Li Su reached the camp and said to the guard, "Please tell General Lu Bu that a very old friend has come to visit him." He was admitted forthwith.

"Worthy brother, have you been well since we last met?" greeted Li Su while bowing.

"How long it is since we last saw each other!" replied Lu Bu, bowing in return. "And where are you now?"

"I am a general in the Imperial Tiger Army. When I learned you were a strong supporter of the Throne, I could not say how I rejoiced. I have come now to present to you a really fine horse, a three-hundred-mile-a-day horse, one that crosses rivers and goes up mountains as if they were the level plain. Its name is Red Hare. It will be a fitting aid to your valor."

Lu Bu bade his guards lead out the horse. It was of a uniform color like glowing-sun red—not a hair of another color. It measured ten spans from head to tail, and from hoof to neck eight spans. When it neighed, the sound filled the empyrean and shook the ocean.



Mark ye the steed swift and tireless, see the dust,
spurned by his hoofs, rising in clouds,
Now it swims the river, anon climbs the hill, rending
the purple mist asunder,
Scornful it breaks the rein, shakes from its head the
jeweled bridle,
It is as a fiery dragon descending from the highest
heaven.



Lu Bu was delighted with the horse and said, "What return can I hope to make for such a creature?"

"What return can I hope for? I came to you out of a sense of what is right," replied Li Su.

Wine was brought in and they drank. "We have seen very little of each other, but I am constantly meeting your honorable father," said Li Su.

"You are drunk," said Lu Bu. "My father has been dead for years."

"Not so; I spoke of Ding Yuan, the man of the day."

Lu Bu started. "Yes, I am with him, but only because I can do no better."

"Sir, your talent is higher than the heavens, deeper than the seas. Who in all the world does not bow before your name? Fame and riches and honors are yours for the taking. And you say you can do no better than remain a subordinate!"

"If I could only find a master to serve," said Lu Bu.

"The clever bird chooses the branch whereon to perch; the wise servant selects the master to serve. Seize the chance when it comes, for repentance ever comes too late."

"Now you are in the government. Who think you is really the bravest of all?" asked Lu Bu.

"I despise the whole lot except Dong Zhuo. He is one who respects wisdom and reveres scholarship; he is discriminating in his rewards and punishments. Surely he is destined to be a really great man."

Lu Bu said, "I wish that I could serve him, but there is no way, I fear." Then Li Su produced his pearls and gold and the jeweled belt, and laid them out before his host. "What is this? What does it mean?" said Lu Bu.

“Send away the attendants,” requested Li Su. And he went on, “Dong Zhuo has long respected your bravery and sent these by my hand. Red Hare was also from him.”

“But, if he loves me like this, what can I do in return?”

Li Su said, “If a stupid fellow like me can be a general in the Imperial Tiger Army, it is impossible to say what honors await you.”

“I am sorry I can offer him no service worth mentioning.”

Li Su said, “There is one service you can do, and an extremely easy one to perform, but you would not render that.”

Lu Bu pondered long in silence, then he said, “I might slay Ding Yuan and bring over his soldiers to Dong Zhuo’s side. What think you of that?”

“If you would do that, there could be no greater service. But such a thing must be done quickly.”

And Lu Bu promised his friend that he would do the deed and come over on the morrow.

So Li Su took his leave. That very night, at the second gong, Lu Bu entered, sword in hand, into his master’s tent. He found Ding Yuan reading by the light of a solitary candle.

Seeing who came in, Ding Yuan said, “My son, what is afoot?”

“I am a bold hero,” said Lu Bu. “Do not think I am willing to be a son of yours!”

“Why this change, Lu Bu?”

As a reply, Lu Bu made one cut, and Ding Yuan’s head fell to the earth.

Then Lu Bu called the attendants and said, “He was an unjust man, and I have slain him. Let those who back me stay. The others may depart.”

Most ran away. Next day, with the head of the murdered man as his gift, Lu Bu betook himself to Li Su, who led him to Dong Zhuo. Dong Zhuo received him with a warm welcome and had wine set before him.

“Your coming is welcome as the gentle dew to the parched grass,” said Dong Zhuo.

Lu Bu made Dong Zhuo seat himself and then made an obeisance, saying, “Pray let me bow to you as my adopted father!”

Dong Zhuo gave his newly won ally gold armor and silken robes, and spread the feast of welcome. They then separated.

Thence Dong Zhuo’s power and influence increased rapidly. He gave the lordship of Hu (an ancient state) and the rank Commander of the Left Army to his brother Dong Min. He appointed Lu Bu Lord of Luoyang, Commander of Capital District, and Cavalry Commander. Dong Zhuo made himself Minister of Works, Grand Commander, and Commander of the Front Army.

The adviser Li Ru never ceased from urging him to carry out the design of deposing the young Emperor.

The now all-powerful Dong Zhuo prepared a banquet in the capital at which all the officers of state were guests. He also bade Lu Bu post a company of armed men right and left ready for action. The feast began, and several courses were served, with nothing to distinguish that banquet from any other.

Then suddenly the host arose and drew his sword, saying, “He who is above us, being weak and irresolute, is unfit for the duties of his high place. Wherefore I, as of old did Yi Yin and Huo Guang, will set aside this

Emperor giving him the title of Prince of Hongnong, and I will place on the throne the present Prince of Chenliu. And those who do not support me will suffer death.”

Fear seized them in its grip and they were silent, all but Yuan Shao, who said, “The Emperor was innocent of any fault, and to set him aside in favor of a commoner is rebellion and nothing else!”

“The empire is in my hands!” cried Dong Zhuo. “When I choose to do this, who will dare to say nay? Think you my sword lacks an edge?”

“If your sword is sharp, mine is never blunt!” said Yuan Shao, as his sword flashed out of the sheath.

The two men stood face to face amid the feasters.

When Ding Yuan by treacherous murder died,
The loss was great to Yuan Shao’s side.

The fate of Yuan Shao will be disclosed in later chapters.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act II

CHAPTER 4

DEPOSITION OF THE EMPEROR: THE PRINCE OF CHENLIU GETS THE THRONE; SCHEMES AGAINST DONG ZHUO: CAO CAO PRESENTS A SWORD.

Dong Zhuo was on the point of slaying Yuan Shao, but Li Ru checked him, saying, "You must not kill rashly while business hangs in the balance."

Yuan Shao, his sword still unsheathed, left the assembly. He hung up the seals of his office at the east gate and went to Jizhou Region.

Dong Zhuo said to Imperial Guardian Yuan Wei, "Your nephew behaved improperly, but I pardon him for your sake. What think you of my scheme?"

"What you think is right," was the reply.

"If anyone opposes the great scheme, he will be dealt with by military law!" said Dong Zhuo.

The ministers, thoroughly dreaded, promised obedience, and the feast came to an end.

Dong Zhuo asked Counselor Zhou Bi and Commander Wu Qiong what they thought of the flight of Yuan Shao. Zhou Bi said, "He left in a state of great anger. In such a state of excitement, much harm may ensue to the present state of affairs, especially as the Yuan family have been noted for their high offices for four generations, and their proteges and dependents are everywhere. If they assemble bold people and call up their clients, all the valiant warriors will be in arms, and the whole Shandong Mountains

will be lost. You had better pardon Yuan Shao and give him a post. He will be glad at being forgiven and will do no harm.”

Wu Qiong said, “Yuan Shao is fond of scheming, but he fails in decision and so is not to be feared. But it would be well to give him rank and thus win popular favor.”

Dong Zhuo followed this advice, and within that day sent a messenger to offer Yuan Shao the governorship of Bohai.

On the first day of the ninth month, the Emperor was invited to proceed to the Hall of Virtue where was a great assembly of officials.

There, Dong Zhuo, sword in hand, faced the gathering and said, “The Emperor is a weakling unequal to the burden of ruling this land. Now listen ye to the document I have prepared!”

And Li Ru read as follows:

“The dutiful Emperor Ling too soon left his people. The emperor is the cynosure of all the people of this land. Upon the present Emperor Bian, Heaven has conferred but small gifts: in dignity and deportment, he is deficient, and in mourning, he is remiss. Only the most complete virtue can grace imperial dignity. Empress He has trained him improperly, and the whole state administration has fallen into confusion. Empress Dong died suddenly, and no one knew why. The doctrine of the three bonds—Heaven, Earth, and Humanity—and the continuity of Heaven-and-Earth interdependence have both been injured.

“But Liu Xie, Prince of Chenliu, is sage and virtuous, beside being of handsome exterior. He conforms to all the rules of propriety: his

mourning is sincere, and his speech is always correct. Eulogies of him fill the empire. He is well-fitted for the great duty of consolidating the rule of Han.

“Now, therefore, the Emperor is deposed and created Prince of Hongnong, and Empress He retires from the administration.

“I pray the Prince of Chenliu to accept the throne in conformity with the decrees of Heaven and Earth, the desires of people, and the fulfillment of the hopes of humankind.”

This having been read, Dong Zhuo bade the officials lead the Emperor down from the throne, remove his seal, and cause him to kneel facing the north, styling himself faithful servant of the Throne and requesting commands. Moreover, Dong Zhuo bade Empress He strip off her royal dress of ceremony and await the imperial command. Both victims of this oppression wept bitterly, and every minister present was deeply affected.

One minister put his discontent into words, crying, “The false Dong Zhuo is the author of this insult, which I will risk my life to wipe away!” And with this he rushed at Dong Zhuo threatening with his ivory baton of office.

It was Chair of the Secretariat Ding Guan. Dong Zhuo had Ding Guan removed and summarily put to death. Before his death, Ding Guan ceased not to rail at the oppressor, nor was he frightened at death.



The rebel Dong Zhuo conceived the foul design
To thrust the King aside and wrong his line.
With folded arms the courtiers stood, save one
Ding Guan, who dared to cry that wrong was done.



Then the emperor designate, the Prince of Chenliu, went to the upper part of the hall to receive congratulations. After this, the former Emperor—now Prince of Hongnong—his mother, and the Imperial Consort, Lady Tang, were removed to the Palace of Forever Calm. The entrance gates were locked against all comers.

It was pitiful! There was the young emperor, after reigning less than half a year, deposed and another put in his place. The new Emperor was Liu Xie, the second son of the late Emperor Ling. He was nine years of age, five years younger than his deposed brother. The new reign-style was changed to Inauguration of Tranquility, the first year (AD 190).

Becoming the Prime Minister, Dong Zhuo was most powerful and arrogant. When he bowed before the throne, he did not declare his name. In going to court, he did not hasten. Booted and armed he entered the reception halls. He amassed a wealth exceeding any other's.

His adviser, Li Ru, impressed upon Dong Zhuo constantly to employ people of reputation so that he should gain public esteem. Therefore, Dong Zhuo restored many offices of those who had been victims of the eunuchs. For those who had died, he gave ranks and positions to their progeny. When they told him Cai Yong was a man of talent, Dong Zhuo summoned him. But Cai Yong would not go. Dong Zhuo sent a message to him that, if he did not come, he and his whole clan should be exterminated. Then, Cai Yong gave in and appeared. Dong Zhuo was very gracious to him and promoted him thrice in a month. Cai Yong became Court Counselor. Such was the generosity of the Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, the deposed ruler, his mother, and his consort were immured in the Palace of Eternal Calm and found their daily supplies gradually diminishing. The deposed Emperor wept incessantly. One day, a pair of swallows gliding to and fro moved him to verse:

“Spring and the green of the tender grass,
Flushes with joy as the swallows pass;
The wayfarers pause by the rippling stream,
And their eyes will new born gladness gleam;
With lingering gaze the roofs I see
Of the Palace that one time sheltered me.
But those whom I sheltered in all righteousness,
Let’s not stay in silence when the days pass useless?”

The messenger, sent by Dong Zhuo from time to time to the palace for news of the prisoners, got hold of this poem and showed it to his master.

“So he shows his resentment by writing poems, eh! A fair excuse to put them all out of the way,” said Dong Zhuo.

Li Ru was sent with ten men into the palace to consummate the deed. The three were in one of the upper rooms when Li Ru arrived. The Emperor shuddered when the maid announced the visitor’s name.

Presently, Li Ru entered and offered a cup of poisoned wine to the Emperor. The Emperor asked what this meant.

“Spring is the season of blending and harmonious interchange, and the Prime Minister sends a wine cup of longevity,” said Li Ru.

“If it be the wine of longevity, you may share it too,” said Empress He.

Then Li Ru became brutally frank. “You will not drink?” asked he. He called the men with daggers and cords and bade the Emperor look at them.

“The cup, or these?” said he.

Then said Lady Tang, “Let the handmaid drink in place of her lord. Spare the mother and her son, I pray!”

“And who may you be to die for a prince?” said Li Ru. Then, he presented the cup to the Empress once more and bade her drink.

She railed against her brother, the feckless He Jin, the author of all this trouble. She would not drink.

Next, Li Ru approached the Emperor.

“Let me say farewell to my mother,” begged he, and he did so in these lines:

“The heaven and earth are changed,
Alas! the sun and the moon leave their courses,
I, once the center of all eyes, am driven to the farthest
confines,
Oppressed by an arrogant minister my life nears its
end,
Everything fails me and vain are my falling tears.”

Lady Tang sang:

“Heaven is to be rent asunder, Earth to fall away,
I, handmaid of an emperor, would grieve if I followed
him not.
We have come to the parting of ways, the quick and
the dead walk not together;
Alas! I am left alone with the grief in my heart.”

When they had sung these lines, they fell weeping into each others' arms.

“The Prime Minister is awaiting my report,” said Li Ru, “and you delay too long. Think you that there is any hope of succor?”

The Empress broke into another fit of railing, “The rebel forces us to death, mother and son, and Heaven has abandoned us. But you, the tool of his crime, will assuredly perish!”

Thereupon, Li Ru grew more angry, laid hands on the Empress and threw her out of the window. Then, he bade the soldiers strangle Lady Tang and forced the lad to swallow the wine of death.

Li Ru reported the achievement to his master, who bade them bury the victims without the city. After this, Dong Zhuo’s behavior was more atrocious than before. He spent his nights in the Palace, defiled the imperial concubines there, and even slept on the Dragon Couch.

Once, he led his soldiers out of the city to Yangcheng when the villagers, men and women, were assembled from all sides for the annual spring festival. His troops surrounded the place and plundered it. They took away booty by the cartload, women as prisoners, and more than one thousand severed heads. The procession returned to Capital Luoyang and published a story that they had obtained a great victory over some rebels. They burned the heads beneath the walls, and the women and jewelry were shared out among the soldiers.

A general named Wu Fu was disgusted at this ferocity and sought a chance to slay Dong Zhuo. Wu Fu constantly wore a breastplate underneath his court dress and carried in conceal a sharp dagger. One day, when Dong Zhuo came to court, Wu Fu met him on the steps and tried to stab him. But Dong Zhuo was a very powerful man and held Wu Fu off till Lu Bu came to his help. Lu Bu struck down the assailant.

“Who told you to rebel?” said Dong Zhuo.

Wu Fu glared at him and cried, “You are not my prince, I am not your minister: where is the rebellion? Your crimes fill the heavens, and every person would slay you. I am sorry I cannot tear you asunder with chariots to appease the wrath of the world!”

Dong Zhuo bade the guards take him out and hack him to pieces. Wu Fu only ceased railing as he ceased to live.



That loyal servant of the latter days of Han.
His valor was high as the heavens, in all ages
unequaled;
In the court itself would he slay the rebel, great is his
fame!
Throughout all time will people call him a hero.



Thereafter Dong Zhuo always went well guarded.

At Bohai, Yuan Shao heard of Dong Zhuo’s misuse of power and sent a secret letter to Minister of the Interior Wang Yun:

“That rebel Dong Zhuo outrages Heaven and has deposed his ruler. Common people dare not speak of him: That is understandable. Yet you suffer his aggressions as if you knew naught of them. How then are you a dutiful and loyal minister? I have assembled an army and desire to sweep clean the royal habitation, but I dare not lightly

begin the task. If you are willing, then find an opportunity to plot against this man. If you would use force, I am at your command.”

The letter arrived, but Wang Yun could see no chance to plot against Dong Zhuo.

One day, while among the throng in attendance, mostly people of long service, Wang Yun said to his colleagues, “This is my birthday; I pray you come to a little party in my humble cot this evening.”

“We certainly will,” they cried, “and wish you long life.”

That night, the tables were spread in an inner room, and his friends gathered there. When the wine had made a few rounds, the host suddenly covered his face and began to weep.

The guests were aghast. “Sir, on your birthday, too, why do you weep?” said they.

“It is not my birthday,” replied Wang Yun. “But I wished to call you together, and I feared lest Dong Zhuo should suspect, so I made that the excuse. This man insults the Emperor and does as he wishes so that the imperial prerogatives are in imminent peril. I think of the days when our illustrious founder destroyed the Qin, annihilated Chu, and obtained the empire. Who could have foreseen this day when that Dong Zhuo has subjugated all to his will? That is why I weep.” Then they all wept with him.

Seated among the guests, however, was Cao Cao, who did not join in the weeping but clapped his hands and laughed aloud. “If all the officers of the government weep till dawn, and from dawn weep till dark, will that slay Dong Zhuo?” said Cao Cao.

Wang Yun turned on him angrily. “Your forebears ate the bounty of the Hans. Do you feel no gratitude? You can laugh?”

“I laughed at the absurdity of an assembly like this being unable to compass the death of one man. Foolish and incapable as I am, I will cut off his head and hang it at the gate as an offering to the people.”

Wang Yun left his seat and went over to Cao Cao.

“These days of late,” Cao Cao continued, “I have bowed my head to Dong Zhuo with the sole desire of finding a chance to destroy him. Now, he begins to trust me, and so I can approach him sometimes. You have a sword with seven precious jewels which I would borrow, and I will go into his palace and kill him. I care not if I die for it.”

“What good fortune for the world that this is so!” said Wang Yun.

With this Wang Yun himself poured out a goblet for Cao Cao, who drained it and swore an oath. After this, the treasured sword was brought out and given to Cao Cao who hid it under his dress. He finished his wine, took leave of the guests, and left the hall. Before long, the others dispersed.

The next day, Cao Cao, with this short sword girded on, came to the palace of the Prime Minister. “Where is the Prime Minister?” asked he.

“In the small guest room,” replied the attendants. So Cao Cao went in and found his host seated on a couch. Lu Bu was at his side.

“Why so late, Cao Cao?” said Dong Zhuo.

“My horse is out of condition and slow,” replied Cao Cao.

Dong Zhuo turned to his henchman Lu Bu. “Some good horses have come in from the west. You go and pick out a good one as a present for him.” And Lu Bu left.

This traitor is doomed! thought Cao Cao. He ought to have struck then, but Cao Cao knew Dong Zhuo was very powerful, and he was afraid to act. He wanted to make sure of his blow.

Now Dong Zhuo's corpulence was such that he could not remain long sitting, so he rolled over couch and lay face inwards.

Now is the time, thought the assassin, and he gripped the good sword firmly. But just as Cao Cao was going to strike, Dong Zhuo happened to look up, and in a mirror he saw the reflection of Cao Cao behind him with a sword in his hand.

"What are you doing, Cao Cao?" said Dong Zhuo, turning suddenly. And at that moment, Lu Bu came along, leading a horse.

Cao Cao in a flurry dropped on his knees and said, "I have a precious sword here which I wish to present to Your Benevolence."

Dong Zhuo took it. It was a fine blade, over a foot in length, inlaid with the seven precious signs and very keen—a fine sword in very truth. Dong Zhuo handed the weapon to Lu Bu while Cao Cao took off the sheath, which he also gave to Lu Bu.

Then, they went out to look at the horse. Cao Cao was profuse in his thanks and said he would like to try the horse. So Dong Zhuo bade the guards bring saddle and bridle. Cao Cao led the creature outside, leapt into the saddle, laid on his whip vigorously, and galloped away eastward.

Lu Bu said, "Just as I was coming up, it seemed to me as if that fellow was going to stab you, only a sudden panic seized him and he presented the weapon instead."

"I suspected him too!" said Dong Zhuo.

Just then, Li Ru came in, and they told him. "Cao Cao has no family here in the capital but lodges quite alone and not far away," said Li Ru.

“Send for him. If he comes forthwith, the sword was meant as a gift. But if he makes any excuses, he had bad intentions. And you can arrest him.”

They sent four prison warders to call upon Cao Cao. They were absent a long time and then came back, saying, “Cao Cao had not returned to his lodging but rode in hot haste out of the eastern gate. To the gate commander’s questions, he replied that he was on a special mission for the Prime Minister. He went off at full speed.”

“His conscience pricked him, and so he fled. There is no doubt that he meant assassination!” said Li Ru.

“And I trusted him so well!” said Dong Zhuo in a rage.

“There must be a conspiracy afoot. When we catch him, we shall know all about it,” said Li Ru.

Letters and pictures of the fugitive Cao Cao were sent everywhere with orders to catch him. A large reward in money was offered and a patent of nobility, while those who sheltered him would be held to share his guilt.

Cao Cao traveled in hot haste toward Qiao, his home county. On the road at Zhongmou, he was recognized by the guards at the gate and made prisoner. They took him to the Magistrate. Cao Cao declared he was a merchant, named Huang Fu. The Magistrate scanned his face most closely and remained in deep thought.

Presently, the Magistrate said, “When I was at the capital seeking a post, I knew you as Cao Cao. Why do you try to conceal your identity?” The Magistrate ordered Cao Cao to the prison till the morrow, when he could send Cao Cao to the capital and claim the reward. He gave the soldiers wine and food as a reward.

About midnight, the Magistrate sent a trusty servant to bring the prisoner into his private rooms for interrogation. “They say the Prime Minister treated you well. Why did you try to harm him?” said the Magistrate.

“How can swallows and sparrows understand the flight of the crane and the wild goose? I am your prisoner and to be sent to the capital for a reward. Why so many questions?”

The Magistrate sent away the attendants and, turning to the prisoner, said, “Do not despise me. I am no mere hireling; only, I have not yet found the lord to serve.”

Said Cao Cao, “My ancestors enjoyed the bounty of Han, and should I differ from a bird or a beast if I did not desire to repay them with gratitude? I have bowed my knee to Dong Zhuo that, thereby, I might find an opportunity against him and so remove this evil from the state. I have failed for this time. Such is the will of Heaven.”

“And where are you going?”

“Home to my county. Thence, I shall issue a summons calling all bold people to come with forces to kill the tyrant. This is my desire.”

Thereupon, the Magistrate himself loosened the bonds of the prisoner, led him to the upper seat, and bowed, saying, “I am called Chen Gong. My aged mother and family are in the east county of Dongjun. I am deeply affected by your loyalty and uprightness, and I will abandon my office and follow you!”

Cao Cao was delighted with this turn of affairs. Chen Gong at once collected some money for the expenses of their journey and gave Cao Cao a different dress. Then, each took a sword and rode away toward Qiao.

Three days later, at eventide, they reached Chenggao. Cao Cao pointed with his whip to a hamlet deep in the woods and said, "There lives my uncle, Lu Boshe, a sworn-brother of my father. Suppose we go and ask news of my family and seek shelter for the night?"

"Excellent!" said his companion Chen Gong, and they rode over, dismounted at the farm gate, and entered.

Lu Boshe greeted them and said to Cao Cao, "I hear the government has sent stringent orders on all sides to arrest you. Your father has gone into hiding to Chenliu. How has this all come about?"

Cao Cao told him and said, "Had it not been for this man here with me, I should have been already hacked to pieces."

Lu Boshe bowed low to Chen Gong, saying, "You are the salvation of the Cao family. But be at ease and rest: I will find you a bed in my humble cottage." Lu Boshe then rose and went into the inner chamber where he stayed a long time. When he came out, he said, "There is no good wine in the house. I am going over to the village to get some for you." And he hastily mounted his donkey and rode away.

The two travelers sat a long time. Suddenly, they heard at the back of the house the sound of a knife being sharpened.

Cao Cao said to Chen Gong, "He is not my real uncle. I am beginning to doubt the meaning of his going-off. Let us listen." So they silently stepped out into a straw hut at the back.

Presently, someone said, "Bind before killing, eh?"

"As I thought," said Cao Cao. "Now unless we strike first, we shall be taken!"

Suddenly Cao Cao and Chen Gong dashed in, sword in hand, and slew the whole household, male and female: in all, eight persons. After this, they

searched the house. In the kitchen, they found a pig bound, ready to be killed.

“You were too suspicious,” said Chen Gong, “and we have slain honest folks!”

Cao Cao and Chen Gong at once mounted and rode away. Soon, they met their host, Lu Boshe, coming home, and over the saddle in front of him they saw two vessels of wine. In his hands, he carried fruits and vegetables.

“Why are you going, Sirs?” Lu Boshe called to them.

“Wanted people dare not linger,” said Cao Cao.

“But I have bidden them kill a pig! Why do you refuse my poor hospitality? I pray you ride back with me.”

Cao Cao paid no heed, urging his horse forward. But he suddenly drew his sword and rode back after Lu Boshe.

“Who is that coming along?” called Cao Cao. Lu Boshe turned and looked back, and Cao Cao at the same instant cut Lu Boshe down.

Chen Gong was frightened. “We were wrong enough before,” cried Chen Gong. “What now is this?”

“When he got home and saw his family killed, think you he would bear it patiently? If he had raised an alarm and followed us, we would have been killed.”

“To kill deliberately is very wrong,” said Chen Gong.

“Rather we let down the world than the world let us down!” was the reply.

Chen Gong only thought. They rode on some distance by moonlight and presently knocked up an inn for shelter. Having first fed their horses, Cao Cao was soon asleep, but Chen Gong lay thinking.

“I took him for a true man and left all to follow him, but he is as cruel as a wolf. If I spare him, he will do more harm later,” thought Chen Gong.

And Chen Gong rose, intending to kill his companion.

In his heart lie cruelty and venom, he is no true man;
In nought does he differ from his enemy Dong Zhuo.

The further fortunes of Cao Cao will be told in later chapters.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act II

CHAPTER 5

CAO CAO APPEALS TO THE POWERFUL LORDS; THE THREE BROTHERS FIGHT AGAINST LU BU.

At the close of the last chapter, Chen Gong was about to slay Cao Cao. But Chen Gong reflected, "I joined him to do righteous things. Now if I killed him, I would only do unrighteousness, and the people would condemn me. Rather I leave in silence."

Rising from his bed before the sunrise, Chen Gong mounted his horse and rode away eastward to his home county of Dongjun.

Cao Cao awoke with the day and missed his companion. Thought he, "Chen Gong thinks me brutal because of a couple of egoistic phrases I used, and so he has gone. I ought to push on, too, and not linger here."

So Cao Cao traveled as quickly as possible toward Qiao. When he saw his father, he related what had happened and said he wanted to dispose of all the family property and enlist soldiers with the money.

"Our possessions are but small," said his father, "and not enough to do anything with. However, there is a graduate here, one Wei Hong, careless of wealth but careful of virtue, whose family is very rich. With his help, we might hope for success."

A feast was prepared, and Wei Hong was invited.

Cao Cao made him a speech: “The Hans have lost their lordship, and Dong Zhuo is really a tyrant. He flouts his prince and is cruel to the people, who gnash their teeth with rage. I would restore the Hans, but my means are insufficient. Sir, I appeal to your loyalty and public spirit.”

Wei Hong replied, “I have long desired this but, so far, have not found a person fit to undertake the task. Since you, Cao Cao, have so noble a desire, I willingly devote all my property to the cause.”

This was joyful news, and the call to arms was forthwith prepared and sent far and near. So they established a corps of volunteers and set up a large, white recruiting banner with the words “Loyalty and Honor” inscribed thereon. The response was rapid, and volunteers came in like rain drops in number.

One day, came a certain Yue Jin from Yangping and another Li Dian from Julu. These two were appointed to Cao Cao’s personal staff.

Another was one Xiahou Dun from Qiao. He was descended from Xiahou Ying of old. Xiahou Dun had been trained from his early boyhood to use the spear and the club. When only fourteen, he had been attached to a certain master-in-arms. One day, one person spoke disrespectfully of his master, and Xiahou Dun killed that person. For this deed, however, he had to flee and had been an exile for some time.

Now he came to offer his services, accompanied by his cousin Xiahou Yuan. Each brought a thousand trained soldiers. Really, these two were brothers of Cao Cao by birth, since Cao Cao’s father was originally of the Xiahou family, and had only been adopted into the Cao family.

A few days later came Cao Cao’s two cousins, Cao Ren and Cao Hong, each with one thousand followers. These two were accomplished horsemen and trained in the use of arms.

Then drill began, and Wei Hong spent his treasure freely in buying clothing, armor, flags, and banners. From all sides poured in gifts of grain.

When Yuan Shao received Cao Cao's call to arms, he collected all those under his command to the number of thirty thousand. Then, he marched from Bohai to Qiao to take the oath to Cao Cao.

Next, a manifesto was issued:

“Cao Cao and his associates, moved by a sense of duty, now make this proclamation. Dong Zhuo defies Heaven and Earth. He is destroying the state and injuring his prince. He pollutes the Palace and oppresses the people. He is vicious and cruel. His crimes are heaped up. Now we have received a secret command to call up soldiers, and we are pledged to cleanse the empire and destroy the evil-doers. We will raise a volunteer army and exert all our efforts to maintain the dynasty and succor the people. Respond to this, O Nobles, by mustering your soldiers.”

Many from every side answered the summons, as the following list shows:

1. Yuan Shu, Governor of Nanyang
2. Han Fu, Imperial Protector of Jizhou Region
3. Kong Zhou, Imperial Protector of Yuzhou Region
4. Liu Dai, Imperial Protector of Yanzhou Region
5. Wang Kuang, Governor of Henei
6. Zhang Miao, Governor of Chenliu
7. Qiao Mao, Governor of Dongjun
8. Yuan Yi, Governor of Shanyang
9. Bao Xin, Lord of Jibei

10. Kong Rong, Governor of Beihai
11. Zhang Chao, Governor of Guangling
12. Tao Qian, Imperial Protector of Xuzhou Region
13. Ma Teng, Governor of Xiliang
14. Gongsun Zan, Governor of Beiping
15. Zhang Yang, Governor of Shangdang
16. Sun Jian, Governor of Changsha
17. Yuan Shao, Governor of Bohai

These contingents varied in size, from ten thousand to thirty thousand, but each was complete in itself with its officers, civil and military, and battle-leaders. They were heading for Capital Luoyang.

The Governor of Beiping, Gongsun Zan, while on his way with his force of fifteen thousand, passed through the county of Pingyuan. There, he saw among the mulberry trees a yellow flag under which marched a small company. When they drew nearer, he saw the leader was Liu Bei.

“Good brother, what do you here?” asked Gongsun Zan.

“You were kind to me once, and on your recommendation, I was made the magistrate of this county. I heard you were passing through and came to salute you. May I pray you, my elder brother, enter into the city and rest your steed?”

“Who are these two?” said Gongsun Zan, pointing to Liu Bei’s Brothers.

“These are Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, my sworn Brothers.”

“Did they fight with you against the Yellow Scarves?” asked Gongsun Zan.

“All my success was due to their efforts,” said Liu Bei.

“And what offices do they fill?”

“Guan Yu is a mounted archer; Zhang Fei is a foot archer.”

“Thus are able people buried!” said Gongsun Zan, sighing. Then he continued. “All the highest in the land are now going to destroy the rebellious Dong Zhuo. My brother, you would do better to abandon this petty place and join us in restoring the House of Han. Why not?”

“I should like to go,” said Liu Bei.

“If you had let me kill him that other time, you would not have this trouble today,” said Zhang Fei to Liu Bei and Guan Yu.

“Since things are so, let us pack and go,” said Guan Yu.

So without more ado, the Three Brothers, with a few horsemen, joined Gongsun Zan and marched with him to join the great army.

One after another, the feudal lords came up and encamped. Their camps extended over seventy miles and more. When all had arrived, Cao Cao, as the head, prepared sacrificial bullocks and horses and called all the lords to a great assembly to decide upon their plan of attack.

Then spoke the Governor of Henei, Wang Kuang, “We have been moved by a noble sense of right to assemble here. Now, must we first choose a chief and bind ourselves to obedience.”

Then, said Cao Cao, “For four generations, the highest offices of state have been filled by members of the Yuan family, and their clients and supporters are everywhere. As a descendant of ancient ministers of Han, Yuan Shao is a suitable man to be our chief lord.”

Yuan Shao again and again declined this honor. But they all said, “It must be he! There is no other!” And then he agreed.

So the next day, a three-story altar was built, and they planted about it the banners of all parties in five directions of space. And they set up white yaks' tails and golden axes and emblems of military authority and the seals of leadership round about.

All being ready, the chief lord was invited to ascend the altar. Clad in ceremonial robes and girded with a sword, Yuan Shao reverently ascended. There, he burned incense, made obeisance and recited the oath:

“The House of Han has fallen upon evil days, the bands of imperial authority are loosened. The rebel minister, Dong Zhuo, takes advantage of the discord to work evil, and calamity falls upon honorable families. Cruelty overwhelms simple folks. We, Yuan Shao and his confederates, fearing for the safety of the imperial prerogatives, have assembled military forces to rescue the state. We now pledge ourselves to exert our whole strength and act in concord to the utmost limit of our powers. There must be no disconcerted or selfish action. Should any depart from this pledge, may he lose his life and leave no posterity. Almighty Heaven and Universal Earth and the enlightened spirits of our forebears, be ye our witnesses!”

The reading finished, Yuan Shao smeared the blood of the sacrifice upon his lips and upon the lips of those who shared the pledge. All were deeply affected by the ceremony, and many shed tears.

This done, the chief lord was supported down from the high place and led to his tent, where he took the highest place, and the others arranged themselves according to rank and age. Here, wine was served.

Presently, Cao Cao said, “It behooves us all to obey the chief we have this day set up, and support the state. There must be no feeling of rivalry or superiority based upon numbers.”

Yuan Shao replied, "Unworthy as I am, yet as elected chief, I must impartially reward merit and punish offenses. Let each see to it that he obeys the national laws and the military precepts. These must not be broken."

"Only thy commands are to be obeyed!" cried all.

Then Yuan Shao said, "My brother, Yuan Shu, is appointed Chief of the Commissariat. He must see to it that the whole camp is well supplied. But the need of the moment is a van leader who shall go to River Si Pass and provoke a battle. The other forces must take up strategic positions in support."

Then, the Governor of Changsha, Sun Jian, offered himself for this service.

"You are valiant and fierce, and equal to this service!" said Yuan Shao.

The force under Sun Jian set out and presently came to River Si Pass. The guard there sent a swift rider to the capital to announce to the Prime Minister the urgency of the situation.

Ever since Dong Zhuo had secured his position, he had given himself up to luxury without stint. When the urgent news reached Adviser Li Ru, he at once went to his master, who, much alarmed, called a great council.

Lu Bu stood forth and said, "Do not fear, my father. I look upon all the lords beyond the Pass as so much stubble. And with the warriors of our fierce army, I will put every one of them to death and hang their heads at the gates of the capital!"

"With your aid, I can sleep secure!" said Dong Zhuo.

But someone behind Lu Bu broke in upon his speech, saying, "An ox-cleaver to kill a chicken! There is no need for the General to go: I will cut off their heads as easily as I would take a thing out of my pocket!"

Dong Zhuo looked up and his eyes rested on a stalwart man of fierce mien, lithe and supple as a beast. He had a round head like a leopard's and shoulders like an ape's. His name was Hua Xiong of Guanxi. Dong Zhuo rejoiced at Hua Xiong's bold words and at once appointed him Commander of the Valiant Cavalry and gave him fifty thousand horsemen and footsoldiers. Hua Xiong and three other generals—Li Su, Hu Zhen, and Zhao Cen—hastily moved toward River Si Pass.

Among the feudal lords, Bao Xin, the Lord of Jibei, was jealous, lest the chosen Van Leader Sun Jian should win too great honors. Wherefore, Bao Xin endeavored to meet the foe first, and so he secretly dispatched his brother, Bao Zhong, with three thousand by a byroad. As soon as this small force reached the Pass, they offered battle.

Fast-reacting, Hua Xiong, at the head of five hundred armored horsemen, swept down from the Pass, crying, "Flee not, rebel!"

But Bao Zhong was afraid and turned back. Hua Xiong came on, his arm rose, the sword fell, and Bao Zhong was cut down from his horse. Most of Bao Zhong's company were captured. Bao Zhong's head was sent to the Prime Minister's palace. Hua Xiong was promoted to Commander-in-Chief.

Sun Jian presently approached the Pass. He had four generals: Cheng Pu of Tuyin, whose weapon was an iron-spined lance with a snake-headed blade; Huang Gai of Lingling, who wielded an iron whip; Han Dang of Lingzhi, using a heavy saber; and Zu Mao of Wujun, who fought with a pair of swords.

Commander Sun Jian wore a helmet of fine silver wrapped round with a purple turban. He carried across his body his sword of ancient ingot iron

and rode a dappled horse with a flowing mane.

Sun Jian advanced to the Pass and hailed the defenders, crying, “Helpers of a villain! Be quick to surrender!”

Hua Xiong bade Hu Zhen lead five thousand out against Sun Jian. Cheng Pu with the snaky lance rode out from Sun Jian’s side and engaged. After a very few bouts, Cheng Pu killed Hu Zhen on the spot by a thrust through the throat.

Then, Sun Jian gave the signal for the main army to advance. But from the Pass, Hua Xiong’s troops rained down showers of stones, which proved too much for the assailants, and they retired into camp at Liangdong. Sun Jian sent the report of victory to Yuan Shao.

Sun Jian also sent an urgent message for supplies to the commissary. But a counselor said to Controller Yuan Shu, “This Sun Jian is a very tiger in the east. Should he take the capital and destroy Dong Zhuo, we should have a tiger in place of a wolf. Do not send him grain. Starve his troops, and that will decide the fate of that army.”

And Yuan Shu gave ears to the detractor and sent no grain or forage. Soon, Sun Jian’s hungry soldiers showed their disaffection by indiscipline, and spies bore the news to the defenders of the Pass.

Li Su made a plot with Hua Xiong, saying, “We will launch tonight a speedy attack against Sun Jian in front and rear so that we can capture him.”

Hua Xiong agreed and prepared for the attack. So the soldiers of the attacking force were told off and given a full meal. At dark, they left the Pass and crept by secret paths to the rear of Sun Jian’s camp. The moon was bright and the wind cool.

They arrived about midnight and the drums beat an immediate attack. Sun Jian hastily donned his fighting gear and rode out. He ran straight into

Hua Xiong, and the two warriors engaged. But before they had exchanged many passes, Li Su's army came up from behind and set fire to whatever would burn.

Sun Jian's army were thrown into confusion and fled in disorder. A melee ensued, and soon only Zu Mao was left at Sun Jian's side. These two broke through the Pass and fled. Hua Xiong coming in hot pursuit, Sun Jian took his bow and let fly two arrows in quick succession, but both missed. He fitted a third arrow to the string, but drew the bow so fiercely that it snapped. He cast the bow to the earth and set off at full gallop.

Then spoke Zu Mao, "My lord's purple turban is a mark that the rebels will too easily recognize. Give it to me, and I will wear it!"

So Sun Jian exchanged his silver helmet with the turban for his general's headpiece, and the two men parted, riding different ways. The pursuers, looking only for the purple turban, went after its wearer, and Sun Jian escaped along a byroad.

Zu Mao, hotly pursued, then tore off the headdress, which he hung on the post of a half-burned house as he passed, and dashed into the thick woods. Hua Xiong's troops, seeing the purple turban standing motionless, dared not approach, but they surrounded it on every side and shot at it with arrows. Presently, they discovered the trick, went up, and seized it.

This was the moment that Zu Mao awaited. At once he rushed forth, his two swords whirling about, and dashed at the leader. But Hua Xiong was too quick. With a loud yell, Hua Xiong slashed at Zu Mao and cut him down the horse.

Hua Xiong and Li Su continued the slaughter till the day broke, and they led their troops back to the Pass.

Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang in time found their chief, and the soldiers gathered. Sun Jian was much grieved at the loss of Zu Mao.

When news of the disaster reached Yuan Shao, he was greatly chagrined and called all the lords to a council. They assembled; Gongsun Zan was the last to arrive.

When all were seated in the tent, Yuan Shao said, "The brother of General Bao Xin, disobeying the rules we made for our guidance, rashly went to attack the enemy; he was slain, and with him many of our soldiers. Now Sun Jian has been defeated. Thus our fighting spirit has suffered, and what is to be done?"

Everyone was silent. Lifting his eyes, Yuan Shao looked round from one to another till he came to Gongsun Zan, and then he remarked three men who stood behind Gongsun Zan's seat. They were of striking appearance as they stood there, all three smiling cynically.

"Who are those men behind you?" said Yuan Shao.

Gongsun Zan told Liu Bei to come forward, and said, "This is Liu Bei, Magistrate of Pingyuan and a brother of mine who shared my humble cottage when we were students."

"It must be the Liu Bei who broke up the Yellow Scarves rebellion," said Cao Cao.

"It is he," said Gongsun Zan, and he ordered Liu Bei to make his obeisance to the assembly, to whom Liu Bei then related his services and his origin, all in full detail.

"Since he is of the Han line, he should be seated," said Yuan Shao, and he bade Liu Bei sit. Liu Bei modestly thanked him, declining. Said Yuan

Shao, "This consideration is not for your fame and office. I respect you as a scion of the imperial family."

So Liu Bei took his seat in the lowest place of the long line of lords. And his two Brothers, with folded arms, took their stations behind him.

Even as they were at this meeting, came in a scout to say that Hua Xiong, with a company of mail-clad horsemen, was coming down from the Pass. They were flaunting Sun Jian's captured purple turban on the end of a bamboo pole. The enemy was soon hurling insults at those within the stockade and challenging them to fight.

"Who dares go out to give battle?" said Yuan Shao.

"I will go," said Yu She, a renowned general of Yuan Shu, stepping forward.

So Yu She went, and almost immediately one came back to say that Yu She had fallen in a third bout with Hua Xiong.

Fear began to lay its cold hand on the assembly.

Then Imperial Protector Han Fu said, "I have a brave warrior among my army. Pan Feng is his name, and he could slay this Hua Xiong."

So Pan Feng was ordered out to meet the foe. With his great battleax in his hand, Pan Feng mounted and rode forth. But soon came the direful tidings that General Pan Feng too had fallen. The faces of the gathering paled at this.

"What a pity my two able generals, Yan Liang and Wen Chou, are not here! Then should we have someone who would not fear this Hua Xiong," said Yuan Shao.

He had not finished when, from the lower end, a voice tolled, "I will go, take Hua Xiong's head, and lay it before you here!"

All turned to look at the speaker. He was tall and had a long beard. His eyes were those of a phoenix, and his eyebrows thick and bushy like silkworms. His face was a swarthy red and his voice deep as the sound of a great bell.

“Who is he?” asked Yuan Shao.

Gongsun Zan told them it was Guan Yu, Brother of Liu Bei.

“And what is he?” asked Yuan Shao.

“He is in the train of Liu Bei as a mounted archer.”

“What! An insult to us all!” roared Yuan Shu from his place. “Have we no leader? How dare an archer speak thus before us? Let us beat him forth!”

But Cao Cao intervened. “Peace, O Yuan Shu! Since this man speaks great words, he is certainly valiant. Let him try. If he fails, then we may reproach him.”

“Hua Xiong will laugh at us if we send a mere archer to fight him,” said Yuan Shao.

“This man looks no common person. And how can the enemy know he is but a bowman?” said Cao Cao.

“If I fail, then can you take my head,” spoke Guan Yu.

Cao Cao bade them heat some wine and offered a cup to Guan Yu as he went out.

“Pour it out,” said Guan Yu. “I shall return in a little space.”

Guan Yu went with his weapon in his hand and vaulted into the saddle. Those in the tent heard the fierce roll of the drums and then a mighty sound as if skies were falling and earth rising, hills trembling and mountains tearing asunder. And they were sore afraid. And while they were listening with ears intent, lo! the gentle tinkle of horse bells, and Guan Yu returned, throwing at their feet the head of the slain leader, their enemy Hua Xiong.

The wine was still warm!



This doughty deed has been celebrated in verse:

The power of the man stands first in all the world,
At the gate of the camp was heard the rolling of the
battle drums;
Then Guan Yu set aside the wine cup till he should
have displayed his valor,
And the wine was still warm when Hua Xiong had
been slain.



Cao Cao was greatly excited at this success.

But Zhang Fei's voice was heard, shouting, "My Brother has slain Hua Xiong. What are we waiting for? Why not break through the Pass and seize Dong Zhuo? Could there have been a better time?"

Again, arose the angry voice of Yuan Shu, "We high officials are too meek and yielding. Here is the petty follower of a small magistrate daring to flaunt his prowess before us! Expel him from the tent, I say."

But again Cao Cao interposed, "Shall we consider the station of he who has done a great service?"

"If you hold a mere magistrate in such honor, then I simply withdraw," said Yuan Shu.

"Is a word enough to defeat a grand enterprise?" said Cao Cao. Then, he told Gongsun Zan to lead the Three Brothers back to their own camp,

and the other chiefs then dispersed.

That night, Cao Cao secretly sent presents of meat and wine to soothe the three after this adventure.

When Hua Xiong's troops straggled back and told the story of defeat and death, Li Ru was greatly distressed. He wrote urgent letters to his master, who called in his trusted advisers to a council.

Li Ru summed up the situation, saying, "We have lost our best leader, and the rebel power has thereby become very great. Yuan Shao is at the head of this confederacy, and his uncle, Yuan Wei, is holder of the office of Imperial Guardianship. If those in the capital combine with those in the country, we may suffer. Therefore, we must remove them. So I request you, Sir Prime Minister, to place yourself at the head of your army and break this confederation."

Dong Zhuo agreed and at once ordered his two generals, Li Jue and Guo Si, to take five hundred troops and surround the residence of Imperial Guardian Yuan Wei, slay every soul regardless of age, and hang the head of Yuan Wei outside the gate as trophy.

Then, Dong Zhuo commanded two hundred thousand troops to advance in two armies. The first fifty thousand were under Li Jue and Guo Si, and they were to hold River Si Pass. They should not necessarily fight. The other one hundred fifty thousand, under Dong Zhuo himself, went to Tiger Trap Pass. His counselors and commanders—Li Ru, Lu Bu, Fan Chou, Zhang Ji, and others—marched with the main army.

Tiger Trap Pass is fifteen miles from Capital Luoyang. As soon as they arrived, Dong Zhuo bade Lu Bu take thirty thousand soldiers and make a

strong stockade on the outside of the Pass. The main body with Dong Zhuo would occupy the Pass.

News of this movement reached the confederate lords. Yuan Shao summoned a council.

Said Cao Cao, “The occupation of the Pass would cut our armies in two; therefore, we must oppose Dong Zhuo’s army on the way.”

So eight of the commanders—Wang Kuang, Qiao Mao, Bao Xin, Yuan Yi, Kong Rong, Zhang Yang, Tao Qian, and Gongsun Zan—were ordered to go in the direction of the Tiger Trap Pass to oppose their enemy. Cao Cao and his troops moved among them as reserve to render help where needed.

Of the eight, Wang Kuang, the Governor of Henei, was the first to arrive, and Lu Bu went to give battle with three thousand armored horsemen. When Wang Kuang had ordered his army, horse and foot, into battle array, he took his station under the great banner and looked over at his foe.

Lu Bu was a conspicuous figure in front of the line. On his head was a triple-curved headdress of ruddy gold with pheasant tails. He wore a warring velvet-red robe of Xichuan silk embroidered with a thousand flowers, which was overlapped by golden mail adorned with a gaping animal’s head, joined by rings at the sides and girt to his waist with a belt fastened by a beautiful lion-head clasp. His bow and arrows were slung over his shoulders, and he carried a long, heavy trident halberd. He was seated on his snorting steed, Red Hare. Indeed, Lu Bu was the man among humans, as Red Hare was the horse among horses.

“Who dares go out to fight him?” asked Wang Kuang, turning to those behind him.

In response, a valiant general from Henei named Fang Yue spurred to the front, his spear set ready for battle. Lu Bu and Fang Yue met; before the fifth bout, Fang Yue fell under a thrust of the Trident Halberd, and Lu Bu dashed forward. Wang Kuang's troops could not stand and scattered in all directions. Lu Bu went to and fro, slaying all he met. He was irresistible.

Luckily, two other troops, led by Qiao Mao and Yuan Yi, came and rescued the wounded Wang Kuang, and Lu Bu pulled back. The three, having lost many troops, withdrew ten miles and made a stockade. And before long the remaining five commanders came up and joined them. They held a council and agreed Lu Bu was a hero no one could match.

And while they sat there, anxious and uncertain, it was announced that Lu Bu had returned to challenge them. They mounted their horses and placed themselves at the heads of eight forces, each body in its station on the high ground. Around them was the opposing army in formation, commanded by Lu Bu, innumerable cavalry and infantry, with splendid embroidered banners waving in the breeze.

They attacked Lu Bu. Mu Shun, a general of Governor Zhang Yang, rode out with his spear set but soon fell at the first encounter with Lu Bu. This frightened the others.

Then galloped forth Wu Anguo, a general under Governor Kong Rong. Wu Anguo raised his iron mace ready at his rival. Lu Bu, whirling his halberd and urging on his steed, came to meet Wu Anguo. The two fought, well-matched for ten bouts, when a blow from the Trident Halberd broke Wu Anguo's wrist. Letting his mace fall to the ground, he fled. Then, all eight of the lords led forth their armies to his rescue, and Lu Bu retired to his line.

The fighting then ceased, and after their return to camp another council met.

Cao Cao said, "No one can stand against the prowess of Lu Bu. Let us call up all the lords and evolve some good plan. If only Lu Bu were taken, Dong Zhuo could easily be killed."

While the council was in progress, again came Lu Bu to challenge them, and again the commanders moved out against him. This time, Gongsun Zan, flourishing his spear, went to meet the enemy. After very few bouts, Gongsun Zan turned and fled; Lu Bu followed at the topmost speed of Red Hare. Red Hare was a three-hundred-mile-a-day horse, swift as the wind. The lords watched as Red Hare gained rapidly upon the flying horseman, and Lu Bu's halberd was poised ready to strike Gongsun Zan just behind the heart. Just then, dashed in a third rider, with round, glaring eyes and a bristling mustache, armed with a ten-foot Serpent Halberd.

"Stay, O twice bastard!" roared he. "I, Zhang Fei of Yan, await you!"

Seeing this opponent, Lu Bu left the pursuit of Gongsun Zan and engaged the new adversary. Zhang Fei was elated, and he rode forth with all his energy. They two were worthily matched, and they exchanged half a hundred bouts with no advantage to either side. Then Guan Yu, impatient, rode out with his huge and weighty Green-Dragon Saber and attacked Lu Bu on the other flank. The three steeds formed a triangle and their riders battered away at each other for thirty bouts, yet still, Lu Bu stood firm.

Then, Liu Bei rode out to his Brothers' aid, his double swords raised ready to strike. The steed with the flowing mane was urged in at an angle, and now Lu Bu had to contend with three surrounding warriors, at whom he struck one after another, and they at him, the flashing of the warriors' weapons looking like the revolving lamps suspended at the new year. And the warriors of the eight armies gazed rapt with amazement at such a battle.

But Lu Bu's guard began to weaken and fatigue seized him. Looking hard in the face of Liu Bei, Lu Bu feigned a fierce thrust, thus making Liu

Bei suddenly draw back. Then, lowering his halberd, Lu Bu dashed through the angle thus opened and got away.

But was it likely they would allow him to escape? They whipped their steeds and followed hard. The soldiers of the eight armies cracked their throats with thunderous cheers and all dashed forward, pressing after Lu Bu as he made for the shelter of the Tiger Trap Pass. And first among his pursuers were the Three Brothers.



An ancient poet has told of this famous fight in these lines:

The fateful day of Han came in the reigns of Huan and

Ling,

Their glory declined as the sun sinks at the close of
day.

Dong Zhuo, infamous minister of state, pulled down
the youthful Bian.

It is true the new Xian was a weakling, too timid for
his times.

Then Cao Cao proclaimed abroad these wicked deeds,
And the great lords, moved with anger, assembled
their forces.

In council met they and chose as their oath-chief Yuan
Shao,

Pledged themselves to maintain the ruling house and
tranquility.

Of the warriors of that time matchless Lu Bu was the
boldest.

His valor and prowess are sung by all within the four
seas.

He clothed his body in silver armor like the scales of a
dragon,

On his head was a golden headdress with pheasant
tails,

About his waist a shaggy belt, the clasp, two wild
beasts' heads with gripping jaws,

His flowing, embroidered robe fluttered about his
form,

His swift courser bounded over the plain, a mighty
wind following,

His terrible Trident Halberd flashed in the sunlight,
bright as a placid lake.

Who dared face him as he rode forth to challenge?

The bowels of the confederate lords were torn with
fear and their hearts trembled.

Then leaped forth Zhang Fei, the valiant warrior of the
north,

Gripped in his mighty hand the long serpent halberd,

His mustache bristled with anger, standing stiff like
wire.

His round eyes glared, lightning flashes darted from
them.

Neither quailed in the fight, but the issue was
undecided.

Guan Yu stood out in front, his soul vexed within him,

His green-dragon saber shone white as frost in the
 sunlight,
His bright colored fighting robe fluttered like butterfly
 wings,
Demons and angels shrieked at the thunder of his
 horse hoofs,
In his eyes was fierce anger, a fire to be quenched only
 in blood.
Next Liu Bei joined the battle, gripping his twin sword
 blades,
The heavens themselves trembled at the majesty of his
 wrath.
These three closely beset Lu Bu and long drawn out
 was the battle,
Always he warding their blows, never faltering a
 moment.
The noise of their shouting rose to the sky, and the
 earth reechoed it,
The heat of battle ranged to the frozen pole star.
Worn out, feeling his strength fast ebbing, Lu Bu
 thought to flee,
He glanced at the hills around and thither would fly
 for shelter,
Then, reversing his halberd and lowering its lofty
 point,
Hastily he fled, loosing himself from the battle;
With head low bent, he gave the rein to his courser,
Turned his face away and fled to Tiger Trap Pass.



The Three Brothers maintained the pursuit to the Pass. Looking up, they saw an immense umbrella of black gauze fluttering in the west wind.

“Certainly there is Dong Zhuo,” cried Zhang Fei. “What is the use of pursuing Lu Bu? Better far seize the chiefest rebel and so pluck up the evil by the roots!”

And he whipped up his steed toward the Pass.



To quell rebellion, seize the leader if you can;
If you need a wondrous service, then first find a
wondrous man.

The following chapters will unfold the result of the battle.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act II

CHAPTER 6

BURNING THE CAPITAL, DONG ZHUO COMMITS AN ATROCITY; HIDING THE IMPERIAL HEREDITARY SEAL, SUN JIAN BREAKS FAITH.

Zhang Fei rode hard up to the Pass, but the defenders sent down stones and arrows like rain so that he could not enter, and he returned. The eight lords all joined in felicitations to the Three Brothers for their services, and the story of victory was sent to Yuan Shao, who ordered Sun Jian to make an immediate advance.

Thereupon, Sun Jian, with two trusty generals, Cheng Pu and Huang Gai, went over to the camp of Yuan Shu. Tracing figures on the ground with his staff, Sun Jian said, "Dong Zhuo and I had no personal quarrel. Yet now I have thrown myself into the battle regardless of consequences, exposed my person to the risk of wounds, and fought bloody battles to their bitter end. And why? That I might be the means of ridding my country of a rebel and—for the private advantage of your family. Yet you, heeding the slanderous tongue of certain counselor, formerly withheld the supplies absolutely necessary to me, and so I suffered defeat. How can you explain, General?"

Yuan Shu, confused and frightened, had no word to reply. He ordered the death of the slanderer to placate Sun Jian.

Then suddenly, they told Sun Jian, "Some officer has come riding down from the Pass to see you, General. He is in the camp."

Sun Jian therefore took his leave and returned to his own camp, where he found the visitor was Li Jue, one of the much trusted commanders of

Dong Zhuo.

“Wherefore come you?” said Sun Jian.

Li Jue replied, “You are the one person for whom my master has respect and admiration, and he sends me to arrange a matrimonial alliance between the two families. He wishes that his daughter may become the wife of your son.”

“What! Dong Zhuo, that rebel and renegade, that subverter of the Throne! I wish I could destroy his nine generations as a thank-offering to the empire! Think you I would be willing to have an alliance with such a family? I will not slay you as I ought, but go, and go quickly! Yield the Pass, and I may spare your lives. If you delay, I will grind your bones to powder and make mincemeat of your flesh!”

Li Jue threw his arms over his head and ran out. He returned to his master and told him what a rude reception he had met with. Dong Zhuo asked his adviser Li Ru how to reply to this.

Li Ru said, “Lu Bu’s late defeat had somewhat blunted the edge of our army’s desire for battle. It would be well to return to the capital and remove the Emperor to Changan, as the street children have been lately singing:

“‘A Han on the west, a Han on the east.
The deer in Changan shall worry least.’”

Li Ru continued, “If you think out this couplet, it applies to the present juncture. Half the first line refers to the founder of the dynasty, Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor, who became ruler in the western city of Changan, which was the capital during twelve reigns. The other half corresponds to Liu Xiu the Latter Han Founder, who ruled from Luoyang, the eastern capital during twelve latter reigns. The revolution of the heavens brings us

back to this starting moment. Thus, if you remove to Changan, there will be no need for anxiety.”

Dong Zhuo was exceedingly pleased and said, “Had you not spoken thus, I should not have understood!”

Then, taking Lu Bu with him, Dong Zhuo started at once for Capital Luoyang.

Here he called all the officials to a great council in the Palace and addressed them, “After two centuries of rule here, the royal fortune has been exhausted, and I perceive that the aura of rule has migrated to Changan, whither I now desire to move the court. All of you had better pack up for the journey.”

Yang Biao, Minister of the Interior, said, “I pray you reflect. The Land Within the Passes is all destruction. There is no reason to renounce the ancestral temples and abandon the imperial tombs here. I fear the people will be alarmed. It is easy to alarm them but difficult to pacify them.”

“Do you oppose the state plans?” said Dong Zhuo angrily.

Another official, Grand Commander Huang Wan, supported his colleague, “In the era of Recommencement (AD 23-25), Fan Chong of the Red Eyebrows rebels burned Changan to the ground and reduced the place to broken tiles. The inhabitants scattered, all but a few. It is wrong to abandon these palaces here for a wasteland.”

Dong Zhuo replied, “The East of the Passes is full of sedition, and all the empire is in rebellion. The city of Changan is protected by the Yaohan Mountains and the Hangu Pass. Moreover, it is near Longyou, whence can be easily brought timber, stone, brick, and building materials. In a month or so, palaces can be erected. So an end to your wild words!”

Yet Minister of Works Xun Shuang raised another protest against disturbing the people, but Dong Zhuo overbore him also.

“How can I stop to consider a few common people when my scheme affects the empire?” said Dong Zhuo.

That day, the three objectors—Yang Biao, Huang Wan, and Xun Shuang—were removed from their offices and reduced to the rank of commoners.

As Dong Zhuo went out to get into his coach, he met two other officers, who made obeisance. They were the Chair of the Secretariat, Zhou Bi, and the Commander of the City Gates, Wu Qiong. Dong Zhuo stopped and asked them what they wanted.

Said Zhou Bi, “We venture to try to dissuade you from moving the capital to Changan.”

Dong Zhuo replied, “You two persuaded me to give Yuan Shao office. Now he has already turned traitor, and you are of the same party!” And without more ado, he bade his guards take both outside the city and put them to death. The command to remove to the new capital immediately was issued.

Speaking to Dong Zhuo, Li Ru pointed out, “We are short of money and food, and the rich people of Luoyang could be easily plundered. This is a good occasion to link them to the rebels and to confiscate their properties.”

Dong Zhuo sent five thousand troops out to plunder and slay. They captured many thousand wealthy householders and, having stuck flags on their heads saying they were “Traitors” and “Rebels,” drove them out of the city and put them to death. Their properties were all seized.

The task of driving forth the inhabitants, some millions, was given to two of Dong Zhuo's commanders, Li Jue and Guo Si. The people were sent off in bands, each band between two parties of soldiers, who drove them toward Changan. Enormous numbers fell by the road side and died in the ditches, and the escort plundered the fugitives and defiled the women. A wail of sorrow arose to the very sky.

Dong Zhuo's final orders as he left Capital Luoyang were to burn the whole city: houses, palaces, temples...everything was devoured by the flames. The capital became but a patch of scorched earth.

Dong Zhuo sent Lu Bu to desecrate the tombs of the emperors and their consorts for the jewels therein, and the common soldiers took the occasion to dig up the graves of officials and plunder the cemeteries of the wealthy. The spoils of the city—gold and silver, pearls and silks, and beautiful ornaments—filled several thousand carts. With these and the persons of the Emperor and his household, Dong Zhuo moved off to the new capital in the first year of Inauguration of Tranquility (AD 190).

Luoyang being thus abandoned, the general of Dong Zhuo at River Si Pass, Zhao Cen, evacuated that post of vantage, which Sun Jian at once occupied. Liu Bei and his Brothers took Tiger Trap Pass, and the confederate lords advanced.

Sun Jian hastened to the late capital, which was still in flames. When he arrived, dense smoke hung all over it and spread for miles around. No living thing—not a fowl, or a dog, or a human being—remained. Sun Jian told his soldiers to extinguish the fires and set out camping places for the confederate lords.

Cao Cao went to see Yuan Shao and said, “Dong Zhuo has gone west. We ought to follow and attack his rear without loss of time. Why do you remain inactive?”

“All our colleagues are worn out, and there is nothing to be gained by attack,” said Yuan Shao.

Cao Cao said, “This moment was most propitious in the utter confusion that reigned—palaces burned, the Emperor abducted, the whole world upset, and no one knowing whither to turn. The villain will soon be ended, and a single blow could exterminate Dong Zhuo. Why not pursue?”

But all the confederate lords seemed of one mind, and that mind was to postpone action. So they did nothing.

“Those unworthy people cannot discuss worthy thing!” cried Cao Cao. Then, he and his six generals—Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Cao Ren, Cao Hong, Li Dian, and Yue Jin—and ten thousand troops started in pursuit.

The road to the new capital led through Yingyang. When Dong Zhuo reached it, Governor Xu Rong went to welcome the cavalcade.

Li Ru said, “As there is some danger of pursuit, it would be well to order the Governor of this place to lay an ambush outside the city. He is to let the pursuers pass and be ready to cut off their retreat, when our army beats them off. That will teach any others not to follow.”

Then, Dong Zhuo ordered Lu Bu to command the rear guard. Very soon, they saw Cao Cao coming up, and Lu Bu laughed at his colleague’s foresight. He set out his troops in fighting order.

Cao Cao rode forward, crying, “Rebels, abductors, drovers of the people, where are you going?”

Lu Bu replied, "Treacherous simpleton, what mad words are these?"

Then, from Cao Cao's army rode forth Xiahou Dun with his spear set, and Lu Bu and Xiahou Dun engaged. The combat had hardly begun when Li Ru with a cohort came in from the left. Cao Cao bade Xiahou Yuan meet this onslaught. However, on the other side appeared Guo Si and his company. Cao Cao sent Cao Ren against Guo Si.

The onrush on three sides was too much to withstand, and Lu Bu's army was overwhelming, so Xiahou Dun had to retire to the main line. Thereupon, Lu Bu's armored troops attacked and completed the defeat. The beaten army of Cao Cao turned toward Yingyang.

They got as far as the foot of a hill, in the evening about the second watch, and the moon made it as light as day. Here they halted to reform. Just as they were burying the boilers to prepare a meal, there arose a great noise of shouting on all sides, and out came the troops of Governor Xu Rong from the ambush, fresh to attack.

Cao Cao, thrown into a flurry, mounted and fled. He ran right in the way of the waiting Xu Rong. Then he dashed off in another direction, but Xu Rong shot an arrow after him, which struck him in the shoulder. The arrow still in the wound, Cao Cao fled for his life. As he went over the hill, two soldiers lying in wait among the grass suddenly dashed out and wounded his horse, which fell and rolled over. And as he slipped from the saddle, he was seized and made prisoner.

Just then a horseman came, riding at full speed and whirling his sword up, cut down both the captors, and rescued Cao Cao. It was Cao Hong.

Cao Cao said, "I am doomed, good brother. Go and save yourself!"

"My lord, mount my horse quickly! I will go afoot," said Cao Hong.

"If those wretches come, what then?" said Cao Cao.

“The world can do without Cao Hong, but not without you, my lord!”

“If I live, I shall owe you my life,” said Cao Cao.

So he mounted. Cao Hong tore off his own breastplate, gripped his sword, and went on foot after the horse. Thus they proceeded till the fourth watch, when they saw before them a broad stream, and behind they still heard the shouts of pursuers drawing nearer and nearer.

“This is my fate,” said Cao Cao. “I am really doomed!”

Cao Hong helped Cao Cao down from his horse. Then, taking off his fighting robe and helmet, Cao Hong took the wounded man on his back and waded into the stream. When they reached the far side, the pursuers had already gained the bank, whence they shot arrows.

Cao Cao, all wet, pushed on. Dawn was near. They went on another ten miles and then sat down to rest under a precipice. Suddenly, loud shouting was heard and a party of horses appeared. It was Governor Xu Rong, who had forded the river higher up. Just at this moment, Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan, with several dozen men, came along.

“Hurt not my lord!” cried Xiahou Dun to Xu Rong, who at once rushed at him.

But the combat was short. Xu Rong speedily fell under a spear thrust of Xiahou Dun, and his troops were driven off. Before long, Cao Cao’s other generals arrived. Sadness and joy mingled in the greetings. They gathered together the few hundreds of soldiers left and then returned to Luoyang.

When the confederate lords entered Luoyang, Sun Jian, after extinguishing the fires, camped within the walls, his own tent set up near the Dynastic

Temple. His people cleared away the debris and closed the rifted tombs. The gates were barred. On the site of the Dynastic Temple, he put up a mat shed containing three apartments, and here he begged the lords to meet and replace the sacred tablets, with solemn sacrifices and prayers.

This ceremony over, the others left and Sun Jian returned to his camp. That night, the stars and moon vied with each other in brightness. As Sun Jian sat in the open air looking up at the heavens, he noticed a mist spreading over the stars of the constellation Draco.

“The Emperor’s star is dulled,” said Sun Jian with a sigh. “No wonder a rebellious minister disturbs the state, the people sit in dust and ashes, and the capital is a waste.” And his tears began to fall.

Then, a soldier pointing to the south said, “There is a beam of colored light rising from a well!”

Sun Jian bade his people light torches and descend into the well. Soon, they brought up the corpse of a woman, not in the least decayed, although it had been there many days. She was dressed in Palace clothing, and from her neck hung an embroidered bag. Opening this, a red box was found, with a golden lock, and when the box was opened, they saw a jade seal, square in shape, four inches each way. On it were delicately engraved five dragons intertwined. One corner had been broken off and repaired with gold. There were eight characters in the seal style of engraving which interpreted read:

I have received the command from Heaven: may my time be always long and prosperous.

Sun Jian showed this to his adviser, General Cheng Pu, who at once recognized it as the Imperial Hereditary Seal of the Emperor. Cheng Pu said, “This seal has a history. In olden days, Bian He saw a phoenix sitting

on a certain stone at the foot of the Jing Mountains. He offered the stone at court. The King of Chu split open the stone and found a piece of jade.

In the twenty-sixth year of Qin Dynasty (BC 221), a jade cutter made a seal from it, and Li Si, the First Emperor's Prime Minister, engraved the characters. Two years later, while the First Emperor was sailing in Dongting Lake, a terrific storm arrived. The Emperor threw the seal to the water as a propitiatory offering, and the storm immediately ceased. Ten years later again, when the First Emperor was making a progress and had reached Huaying, an old man by the roadside handed a seal to one of the attendants saying, 'This is now restored to the ancestral dragon!' and then disappeared. Thus, the jewel returned to Qin.

"The next year, the First Emperor died. Later Zi Ying, the last Emperor of Qin and grandson of the First Emperor, presented the seal to Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor, the founder of Han Dynasty. Two hundred years later, in Wang Mang's rebellion, the Emperor's mother, Lady Yuan, struck two of the rebels, Wang Xun and Su Xian, with the seal and broke off a corner, which was repaired with gold. Liu Xiu the Latter Han Founder got possession of it at Yiyang, and it has been regularly bequeathed thereafter.

"I heard this treasured seal had been lost during the trouble in the Palace when the Ten Regular Attendants hurried off the Emperor. It was missed on His Majesty's return. Now my lord has it and certainly will come to the imperial dignity. But you must not remain here in the north. Quickly go home to the south of the Great River, where you can lay plans for the accomplishment of the great design."

"Your words exactly accord with my thoughts," said Sun Jian. "Tomorrow, I will make an excuse that I am unwell and get away."

The soldiers were told to keep the discovery a secret. But one among them was a compatriot of the elected chief of the confederacy, Yuan Shao. He thought this might be of great advantage to him, so he stole away out of the camp and betrayed his master. He went to Yuan Shao's camp, informed the secret, and received a liberal reward. Yuan Shao kept the informant in his own camp.

Next morning, Sun Jian came to take leave, saying, "I am rather unwell and wish to return to Changsha."

Yuan Shao laughed, saying, "I know what you are suffering from: it is called the Imperial Hereditary Seal!"

This was a shock to Sun Jian, and he paled but said, "Whence these words?"

Yuan Shao said, "The armies were raised for the good of the state and to relieve it from oppression. The Seal is state property, and since you have got hold of it, you should publicly hand it over to me as chief. When Dong Zhuo has been slain, it must go back to the government. What do you mean by concealing it and going away?"

"How could the Seal get into my hands?" said Sun Jian.

"Where is the article out of the well near the Hall of Paragons?"

"I have it not; why harass me thus?"

"Quickly produce it, or it will be the worst for you!"

Sun Jian pointing toward the heavens as an oath said, "If I have this jewel and am hiding it myself, may my end be unhappy and my death violent!"

The lords all said, "After an oath like this, we think he cannot have it."

Then Yuan Shao called out his informant. "When you pulled that thing out of the well, was this man there?" asked he of Sun Jian. Sun Jian's anger

burst forth, and he sprang forward to kill the man. Yuan Shao also drew his sword, saying, "You touch that soldier, and it is an insult to me!"

Behind Sun Jian, Generals Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang stepped forth; behind Yuan Shao, Generals Yan Liang and Wen Chou were ready to act. In a moment, on all sides swords flew from their scabbards. But the confusion was stayed by the efforts of the others, and Sun Jian left the assembly. Soon, he broke up his camp and marched to his own place.

Yuan Shao was not satisfied. He wrote to Jingzhou Region and sent the letter by a trusty hand to tell Imperial Protector Liu Biao to stop Sun Jian and take away the seal.

Just after this came the news of the defeat and misfortune of Cao Cao, and when he was coming home, Yuan Shao sent out to welcome him and conduct him into camp. They also prepared a feast to console him.

During the feast Cao Cao said sadly, "My object was for the public good, and all you gentlemen nobly supported me. My plan was to get Yuan Shao with his Henei troops to approach Mengching, my force at Qiao to keep Chenggao, and the others of you to hold Suanzao, to close the passes of Huanyuan and Daigu, and to take possession of the granaries, to control the points of vantage, and thus secure the Capital District. I planned for Yuan Shu with his Nanyang army to occupy the counties of Danshi and Xilin and go into Wu Pass to help the three support areas. All were to fortify their positions and not to fight. Advantage lay in a diverse military coalition that could show the empire a possibility of dealing with the rebellion. We could have convinced the people to side with us against Dong Zhuo. Victory would have been ours at once. But then came delays and doubts and inaction, and the confidence of the people was lost, and I am ashamed."

No reply was possible, and the guests dispersed. Cao Cao saw that the others mistrusted him, and in his heart knew that nothing could be accomplished. So he led off his force to Yanzhou Region.

Then Gongsun Zan said to Liu Bei, “This Yuan Shao is incapable, and things will turn chaotic. We had better go, too.”

So he broke camp and went north. At Pingyuan, he left Liu Bei in command and went to strengthen his own position and refresh his troops.

The Imperial Protector of Yanzhou, Liu Dai, wished to borrow grain of the Governor of Dongjun, Qiao Mao. Being denied, Liu Dai attacked the camp, killed Qiao Mao, and took over his entire army. Yuan Shao, seeing the confederacy breaking up, also marched away and went east.

On the way home, Sun Jian passed through Jingzhou Region.

The Imperial Protector of Jingzhou, Liu Biao, was a scion of the imperial house and a native of Shanyang. As a young man, he had made friends with many famous people, and he and his companions were called the Eight Wise Ones. The other seven were:

1. Chen Xiang from Runan
2. Fan Pang from Runan
3. Kong Yu from Luting
4. Fan Kang from Bohai
5. Tan Fu from Shanyang
6. Zhang Jian from Shanyang
7. Cen Zhi from Nanyang

Liu Biao was friends with all these. He even had three famous persons who helped him in the government of his region. They were Kuai Liang and Kuai Yue from Yanping, and Cai Mao from Xiangyang.

When Yuan Shao's letter detailing the fault of Sun Jian arrived, Liu Biao ordered Kuai Yue and Cai Mao, with ten thousand soldiers, to bar the way. When Sun Jian drew near, the force was arranged in fighting order and the leaders were in the front.

"Why are you thus barring the road with armed troops?" asked Sun Jian.

"Why do you, a servant of Han, secrete the Emperor's special seal? Leave it with me at once, and you go free," said Kuai Yue.

Sun Jian angrily ordered out General Huang Gai. On the other side, Cai Mao rode forth with his sword set to strike. But after a few bouts Huang Gai dealt Cai Mao a blow with his iron whip on the armor just over the heart. Cai Mao turned his steed and fled, and Sun Jian got through with a sudden rush.

However, there arose the sound of gongs and drums on the hills behind, and there was Liu Biao in person with a large army.

Sun Jian rode straight up to him and bowing low spoke, "Why did you, on the faith of a letter from Yuan Shao, try to coerce the chief of a neighboring region?"

"You have concealed the state jewel, and I want you to restore it," was Liu Biao's reply.

"If I have this thing, may I die a violent death!"

"If you want me to believe you, let me search your baggage."

"What force have you that you dare come to flout me thus?"

And only Liu Biao's prompt retirement prevented a battle. Sun Jian proceeded on his way. But from the rear of the second hill, an ambush suddenly discovered itself, and Kuai Yue and Cai Mao were still pursuing. Sun Jian seemed entirely hemmed in.

What does a man hold the state jewel for,
If its possession leads to strife?

How Sun Jian got clear of the difficulty will presently be told.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act II

CHAPTER 7

YUAN SHAO FIGHTS GONGSUN ZAN AT THE RIVER PAN; SUN JIAN
ATTACKS LIU BIAO ACROSS THE GREAT RIVER.

At the close of the last chapter, Sun Jian was surrounded. However, aided by Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang, he eventually fought his way through, though with the loss of more than half his troops. Sun Jian returned to the South Land, the territories southeast of the Great River. Henceforward, Sun Jian and Liu Biao were open enemies.

Yuan Shao was in Henei. Being short of supplies, he sent to borrow from the Imperial Protector of Jizhou, Han Fu, whence he obtained the wherewithal to support his army.

Then one of Yuan Shao's advisers, Peng Ji, said to him, "You are really the strongest power here about. Why, then, depend upon another for food? Jizhou Region is rich and wide. Why not seize it?"

"I have no good plan," replied Yuan Shao.

"You could secretly send a letter to Gongsun Zan, asking him to attack, promising him your support. Imperial Protector Han Fu of Jizhou, being incapable, must ask you to take over his region, and you will get it without lifting a finger."

So the letter was sent. When Gongsun Zan saw therein the proposal to make a joint attack and divide the territory, he agreed to give his help. In the

meantime, Yuan Shao had sent to warn Han Fu of Gongsun Zan's threat. Han Fu sought advice from Counselors Xun Chang and Xin Ping.

Xun Chang said, "Governor Gongsun Zan of Beiping is commanding a huge and strong army. If he came to attack us, we could not stand against him, especially if he had the help of Liu Bei and his Brothers. At present, Yuan Shao is bolder than most, and he has many able and famous leaders under him. You cannot do better than ask him to assist in administering this region. Yuan Shao will certainly treat you with generosity, and you need have no fear from Gongsun Zan."

Han Fu agreed and sent a message to Yuan Shao by the hand of Guan Chun.

But Commander Geng Wu remonstrated with his master, saying, "Yuan Shao is a needy man with a hungry army and as dependent on us for existence as an infant in the arms of its mother. Stop the flow of milk, and the infant dies. Why should you hand the region over to him? It is nothing less than letting a tiger into the sheepfold!"

Han Fu replied, "I am one of the clients of the Yuan family, and I know the abilities of Yuan Shao, which is far better than mine! Why are you all so jealous? The ancients counseled yielding to the sage."

Geng Wu sighed, "Jizhou is lost!"

When the news got abroad, more than thirty officers of Jizhou left their employment and the city. However, Geng Wu and Guan Chun hid in the suburbs to await the arrival of Yuan Shao.

They had not long to wait. Some days later, Yuan Shao with his soldiers came, and Geng Wu and Guan Chun tried to assassinate him with knives. This attempt failed. Yuan Shao's generals, Yan Liang and Wen

Chou, beheaded Geng Wu and Guan Chun instantly. Thus both of them died, and the object of their hatred entered Jizhou City.

Yuan Shao's first act was to confer on Han Fu a high sounding title—General Who Demonstrates Grand Vigor and Courage in Arms—but the administration was entrusted to four of Yuan Shao's confidants—Tian Feng, Ju Shou, Xu You, and Peng Ji—who speedily deprived the Imperial Protector of all power. Full of chagrin, Han Fu soon abandoned all, even his family, and rode alone to take refuge with the Governor of Chenliu, Zhang Miao.

Hearing of Yuan Shao's invasion, Gongsun Zan sent his brother, Gongsun Yue, to see the usurper and demand his share of the region.

"I want to see your elder brother himself. He and I have things to discuss," said Yuan Shao.

Thus, Gongsun Yue was sent back. But after traveling some fifteen miles on the homeward road, Gongsun Yue saw a group of soldiers appear.

"We are guards of Prime Minister Dong Zhuo!" cried the soldiers.

Instantly, Gongsun Yue was killed by a flight of arrows. Those of Gongsun Yue's followers who escaped carried the news to their late master's brother.

Gongsun Zan was very angry and said, "Yuan Shao prevailed on me to attack, and now he has taken possession! Also, he pretends the murderers of my brother were not his people! Shall I not avenge my brother's injury?"

Gongsun Zan mustered all his force for the attack. Learning of the movement, Yuan Shao sent out his army, and they met at River Pan. They halted on opposite sides of the river, over which was a bridge.

Gongsun Zan took his station on the bridge and cried to his enemy, "Renegade, how dared you mislead me?"

Yuan Shao rode to the other end of the bridge and, pointing at Gongsun Zan, replied, "Han Fu yielded place to me because he was unequal to the rule! What concern is it of yours?"

Gongsun Zan replied, "Formerly, you were regarded as loyal and public spirited, and we chose you as chief of the confederacy. Now, your deeds prove you cruel and base and wolf-hearted in behavior! How can you look the world in the face?"

"Who will capture him?" cried Yuan Shao in a rage.

At once, Wen Chou rode out with his spear set. Gongsun Zan rode down the bridge to the enemy's side, where the two engaged. Ten bouts showed Gongsun Zan the terrible power of Wen Chou, and so he drew off.

The enemy came on. Gongsun Zan took refuge within his formation, but Wen Chou cut his way in and rode this way and that, slaying right and left. The four best of Gongsun Zan's generals offered joint battle, but one fell under the first stroke of the doughty warrior, and the other three fled. Wen Chou followed, clearing through to the rear of the army. Gongsun Zan made for the mountains.

Wen Chou forced his horse to its utmost pace, crying hoarsely, "Down! Dismount and surrender!"

Gongsun Zan fled for life. His bow and quiver dropped from his shoulders, his helmet fell off, and his hair streamed straight behind him as he rode in and out between the sloping hills. Then his steed stumbled and he was thrown, rolling over and over to the foot of the slope.

Wen Chou was now very near and poising his spear for the thrust. Then, suddenly, came out from the shelter of a grassy mound on the left a general of youthful mien but sitting his steed bravely and holding a sturdy

spear. He rode directly at Wen Chou, and Gongsun Zan crawled up the slope to look on.

The new warrior was of middle height with bushy eyebrows and large eyes, a broad face and a heavy jowl, a youth of commanding presence. The two exchanged some fifty bouts, and yet neither had the advantage. Then Gongsun Zan's rescue force came along, and Wen Chou turned and rode away. The warrior did not pursue.

Gongsun Zan hurried down the hill and asked the young fellow who he was.

He bowed low and replied, "My name is Zhao Yun from Changshan. I first served Yuan Shao, but when I saw that he was disloyal to his prince and careless of the welfare of the people, I left him, and I was on my way to offer service to you. This meeting in this place is most unexpected."

Gongsun Zan was very pleased, and the two went together to the camp, where they at once busied themselves with preparations for a new battle.

Next day, Gongsun Zan prepared for battle by dividing his army into two wings. He had five thousand cavalry in the center, all mounted on white horses. Gongsun Zan had formerly seen service against the northern frontier tribes, the Qiang Peoples, where he always placed his white horses in the van of his army, and thus he had won the sobriquet of General Who Commands White Horses. The tribes held him so much in fear that they always fled as soon as the white horses, their sacred creatures, appeared.

On Yuan Shao's side, Yan Liang and Wen Chou were Leaders of the Van. Each had one thousand archers and crossbowmen. They were set out half on either side, those on the left to shoot at Gongsun Zan's right and those on the right to shoot at his left. In the center was Qu Yi, with eight

hundred bowmen and ten thousand of footsoldiers and horsemen. Yuan Shao took command of the reserve force in the rear.

In this fight, Gongsun Zan employed his new adherent, Zhao Yun, for the first time and, as Gongsun Zan did not feel assured of Zhao Yun's good faith, put him in command of a company at the rear. The Van Leader was Yan Guang, and Gongsun Zan himself commanded the center. He took his place on horseback on the bridge beside an enormous, red standard on which was displayed the words "Commanding General" in gold embroidery.

From sunrise to noon, the drums rolled for the attack, but Yuan Shao's army made no move. Qu Yi made his bowmen hide under their shields. They heard the roar of explosions, the whistling of arrows, and the rattle of the drums, as Yan Guang approached from the other side, but Qu Yi and his men lay closer than ever and never stirred. They waited till Yan Guang had gotten close to them, and then, as the sound of a bomb rent the air, the whole eight hundred men let fly their arrows in a cloud. Yan Guang was quite taken aback and would have retired, but Qu Yi rode furiously toward him, whirled up his sword and cut him down.

So Gongsun Zan's army lost that battle. The two wings that should have come to the rescue were kept back by the bowmen under Yan Liang and Wen Chou. Yuan Shao's troops advanced right up to the bridge. Then Qu Yi rode forward, slew the standard-bearer, and hacked through the staff of the embroidered banner. Seeing this, Gongsun Zan turned his steed and galloped away.

Qu Yi followed. But just as he caught up to the fugitive, there came prancing forth Zhao Yun, who rode directly at him, with spear ready to strike. After a few bouts, Qu Yi was laid in the dust. Then, Zhao Yun attacked the soldiers and turned the tide. Plunging forward on this side,

dashing in on that, he went through as if there were no antagonists and, seeing this, Gongsun Zan turned and came again into the fight. The final victory was on his side.

From the scouts sent to find out how the battle went, Yuan Shao heard the good news of Qu Yi's success in slaying the standard-bearer, capturing the flag, and his pursuit. So Yuan Shao took no further care before riding out with Tian Feng and a few guards to look on at the enemy and enjoy his victory.

“Ha ha!” Yuan Shao laughed. “Gongsun Zan is an incapable!”

But even as Yuan Shao spoke, he saw in front the redoubtable Zhao Yun. His guards hastened to prepare their bows, but before they could shoot, Zhao Yun was in their midst, and men were falling before him wherever he went. The others fled. Gongsun Zan's army then gathered round and hemmed in Yuan Shao.

Tian Feng then said to his master, “Sir, take refuge in this empty building here!”

But Yuan Shao dashed his helmet to the ground, crying, “The brave person rather faces death in battle than seeks safety behind a wall!”

This bold speech gave new courage to his soldiers, who now fought fiercely and with such success that Zhao Yun could nowhere force his way in. Yuan Shao was soon reinforced by the arrival of his main body and Yan Liang, and the two armies pressed forward. Zhao Yun could only just get Gongsun Zan safe out of the press. Then they fought their way back to the bridge. But Yuan Shao's troops still came on and fought their way across the bridge, forcing multitudes of their adversaries into the water, where many were drowned.

Yuan Shao was leading in person, and his troops still advanced...but not more than two miles, for soon a great shouting was heard behind some hills, whence suddenly burst out a body of troops led by Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei.

At Pingyuan, they had heard of the struggle between their protector and his enemy, Yuan Shao, and had at once set out to help. Now, the three riders, each with his peculiar weapon, flew straight at Yuan Shao, who was so frightened that his soul seemed to leave his body and fly beyond the confines of Heaven.

His sword fell from his hand, and he fled for his life. He was chased across the bridge when Gongsun Zan called in his army, and they returned to camp.

After the usual greetings, Gongsun Zan said, "If you had not come to our help, we would have been in very bad case."

Liu Bei and Zhao Yun were made acquainted with each other, and a warm affection sprang up from the very first so that they were always together.

Yuan Shao had lost that battle, and Gongsun Zan would not risk another. They strengthened their defenses, and the armies lay inactive for over a month. In the meantime, news of the fighting had reached Capital Changan, and Dong Zhuo was told.

His adviser, Li Ru, went to see his master and said, "The two active leaders of today are Yuan Shao and Gongsun Zan, who are at grips at River Pan. Pretend you have an imperial command to make peace between them, and both will support you out of gratitude for your intervention."

“Good!” said Dong Zhuo.

So he sent Imperial Guardian Ma Midi and Court Administrator Zhao Qi on the mission. As these men were arriving at the North of Yellow River, Yuan Shao sent out to welcome them thirty miles from his headquarters and received the imperial command with the greatest respect. Then, the two officers went to Gongsun Zan and made known their errand. Gongsun Zan sent letters to his adversary proposing friendship. The two emissaries returned to report their task accomplished. Gongsun Zan drew off his army. He also sent a memorial eulogizing Liu Bei, who was raised to the rank of Governor of Pingyuan.

The farewell between Liu Bei and Zhao Yun was affecting. They held each other's hands a long time, their eyes streaming with tears, and could not tear themselves apart.

Zhao Yun said with a sob, “I used to think Gongsun Zan a true hero, but I see now that he is no different from Yuan Shao. They are both alike.”

“But you are now in his service. We shall surely meet again,” said Liu Bei.

Both men wept freely as they separated.

Now Yuan Shu, in Nanyang, hearing that his brother had come into Jizhou, sent to beg a thousand horses. The request was refused and enmity sprang up between the brothers. Yuan Shu also sent to Jingzhou to borrow grain, which Imperial Protector Liu Biao would not send. In his resentment, Yuan Shu wrote to Sun Jian, Governor of Changsha, trying to get him to attack Liu Biao. The letter read like this:

“When Liu Biao stopped you on your way home, it was at the instigation of my brother. Now the same two have planned to fall upon your territories in the South Land, wherefore you should at once strike at Liu Biao. I will capture my brother for you and both resentments will be appeased. You will get Jingzhou, and I shall have Jizhou.”

“I cannot bear Liu Biao,” said Sun Jian as he finished reading this letter. “He certainly did bar my way home, and I may wait many years for my revenge if I let slip this chance!”

He called a council.

“You may not trust Yuan Shu. He is very deceitful,” said Cheng Pu.

“I want revenge on my own part. What care I for his help?” said Sun Jian.

He dispatched Huang Gai to prepare a river fleet, then arm and provision them. Big warships were to take horses on board. The force soon set out.

News of these preparations came to Liu Biao, and he hastily summoned his advisers and commanders.

Kuai Liang told him to be free from anxiety, and said, “Put General Huang Zu at the head of the Jiangxia army to make the first attack, and you, Sir, support him with the forces from Xiangyang. Let Sun Jian come riding the rivers and straddling the lakes: what strength will he have left after arriving here?” So Liu Biao bade Huang Zu prepare to march, and a great army was assembled.

Here it may be said that Sun Jian had four sons, all the issue of his wife who was of the Wu family. Their names, in order, were Sun Ce, Sun Quan, Sun Yi, and Sun Kuang. Sun Jian had a second wife who was the sister of his first wife, and the second wife bore him a son and a daughter,

the former called Sun Lang, the latter Sun Ren. Sun Jian had also adopted a son from a Yu family and named him Sun Hu. And he had a younger brother named Sun Jing.

As Sun Jian was leaving on this expedition, his brother, Sun Jing, with all his six sons, stood in front of his steed and dissuaded him, saying, “Dong Zhuo is the real ruler of the state, for the Emperor is a weakling. The whole country is in rebellion, everyone is scrambling for territory. Our area is comparatively peaceful, and it is wrong to begin a war merely for the sake of a little resentment. I pray you, brother, think before you start.”

Sun Jian replied, “Brother, say no more. I desire to make my strength felt throughout the empire, and shall I not avenge my injuries?”

“Then Father, if you must go, let me accompany you,” said the eldest son Sun Ce.

This request was granted, and father and son embarked to go to ravage the city of Fankou.

By now, Huang Zu had placed archers and crossbowmen along the river bank. When the ships approached, a flight of arrows met them. Sun Jian ordered his troops to remain under cover in the ships, which then sailed to and fro, drawing fire for three days. Several times, the ships pretended to land, and this drew showers of arrows from the bank.

At last, the arrows of the defenders were all shot away, and Sun Jian, who collected them, found he had many myriads. Then, with a fair wind, Sun Jian’s troops shot them back at the enemy. Those on the bank were thrown into great disorder and retired.

The army then landed. Two divisions led by Cheng Pu and Huang Gai set out for Huang Zu's camp along different roads, and between them marched Han Dang. Under this triple attack, Huang Zu was worsted. He left Fankou and hastened to Dengcheng.

Leaving the ships under the command of Huang Gai, Sun Jian led the pursuing force. Huang Zu came out of his city and drew up for battle in the open country. When Sun Jian had disposed his army, he rode out to the standard. Sun Ce, clad in armor, placed himself beside his father.

Huang Zu rode out with two generals—Zhang Hui from Jiangxia and Chen Sheng from Xiangyang. Flourishing his whip, Huang Zu abused his enemy, “You swarm of rebels from the south! Why do you invade the land of a scion of the ruling house?”

Zhang Hui challenged to combat, and Han Dang went out to accept. The two champions fought thirty bouts, and then Chen Sheng, seeing his fellow general becoming exhausted, rode to his aid. Sun Jian saw Chen Sheng coming, laid aside his spear, reached for his bow, and shot an arrow wounding Chen Sheng in the face. He fell from his horse. Panic seized upon Zhang Hui at the fall of his comrade, and he could no longer defend himself. Then Han Dang, with a slash of his sword, clove Zhang Hui's skull in twain.

Both having fallen, Cheng Pu galloped up to make prisoner of Huang Zu, who threw off his helmet, slipped from his steed, and mingled for safety among his troops. Sun Jian led on the attack and drove the enemy to the Han River, where he ordered Huang Gai to move the fleet upriver and moor there.

Huang Zu led his defeated troops back and told Liu Biao, saying, “Sun Jian was too strong for my army!”

Kuai Liang was called in to advise, and he said, "Our newly defeated soldiers have no heart for fighting now. Therefore, we must fortify our position while we seek help from Yuan Shao. Then, we can extricate ourselves."

"A stupid move!" said Cai Mao. "The enemy is at the city gates: shall we fold our hands and wait to be slain? Give me troops, and I will go out and fight to the finish!"

So Cai Mao was placed in command of ten thousand troops and went out to the Xian Hills, where he drew up his battle line. Sun Jian led the invaders, now flushed with success.

When Cai Mao approached, Sun Jian looked at him and said, "He is brother-in-law to Liu Biao. Who will capture him?"

Cheng Pu set his iron-spined lance and rode out. After a few bouts, Cai Mao turned and fled. Sun Jian's army rode in and slaughtered till corpses filled the countryside, and Cai Mao rushed back and took refuge in Xiangyang.

Kuai Liang said, "Cai Mao ought to be put to death by military law! This defeat was due to his obstinacy."

But Liu Biao was unwilling to punish the brother of his newly wedded wife.

Sun Jian surrounded Xiangyang and assailed the walls daily. One day, a fierce gale sprang up, and the pole bearing his standard was broken.

"Very inauspicious!" said Han Dang. "We ought to go back."

Sun Jian said, "I have won every battle, and the city is on the point of falling. Shall I return because the wind felled a flagstaff?" He flouted the advice and attacked the walls still more vigorously.

Within the city, the defenders had seen an omen.

Kuai Liang told Liu Biao, "Last night, I saw that a great star fall into the sky, corresponding to Sun Jian's territory. I calculated that it inferred the fall of Sun Jian." Then, Kuai Liang advised Liu Biao to seek help from Yuan Shao as quickly as possible.

So Liu Biao wrote. Then, he asked who would undertake to fight his way through the blockade with the letter. One Lu Gong, a warrior of great strength, offered himself for this service.

Kuai Liang said, "If you undertake this service, listen to my advice. You will have five hundred soldiers: choose good bowmen. Dash through the enemy's formation and make for Xian Hills. You will be pursued, but send a hundred soldiers up the hill to prepare large stones, and place a hundred archers in ambush in the woods. These are not to flee from the pursuers but to beguile them along in devious ways round to the place where the boulders have been prepared. There, stones will be rolled down and arrows shot. If you succeed, fire off a series of bombs as a signal, and the armies in the city will come out to help. If you are not pursued, get away as fast as possible. Tonight will be suitable as there is very little moon. Start at dusk."

Lu Gong, having received these directions, prepared his force to carry them out. As soon as day began to close in, he went quietly out at the east gate.

Sun Jian was in his tent when he heard shouting, and a soldier came to report: "There was a group of horsemen going out from the city!"

Sun Jian at once mounted and rode out with thirty horsemen to discover the cause. Lu Gong's troops had already hidden themselves in the thick woods. Sun Jian rode ahead of his escort, and soon he found himself alone and close to the enemy. He called out to them to halt. Lu Gong at once turned back and came as if to fight. But they had only exchanged a single pass when Lu Gong again fled, taking the road among the hills. Sun Jian followed but soon lost sight of his foe.

Sun Jian turned up the hill. Then the gongs clanged, and down the hills fell showers of stones, while from among the trees, the arrows flew in clouds. Sun Jian was hit by several arrows, and a huge stone crushed in his head. Both he and his steed were killed. Sun Jian was only thirty-seven years old at his death.

His escort was overpowered and every man of them slain. Then, Lu Gong let off a series of bombs, the sign of success, as agreed. At this signal, Huang Zu, Kuai Yue, and Cai Mao led three armies out of the city and fell upon the South Land troops, throwing them into the utmost confusion.

When Huang Gai heard the sound of battle, he led up the troops from the ships. He met Huang Zu and took Huang Zu prisoner after a brief fight.

Cheng Pu set out to bear the sad news to Sun Ce. While he was seeking a way out, he came across Lu Gong. Cheng Pu at once put his horse at full speed and engaged Lu Gong. After a few bouts, Lu Gong went down under a spear thrust. The battle became chaotic and continued till daylight broke, when each drew off his army. Liu Biao withdrew into the city.

When Sun Ce returned to the river, he heard that his father had perished in the fight and his body had been carried within the enemy's

walls. He uttered a great cry, and the army joined him with wailing and tears.

“How can I return home, leaving my father’s corpse with them?” cried Sun Ce.

Huang Gai said, “We have Huang Zu as our prisoner. Let one enter the city and discuss peace, giving up our prisoner for our lord’s body.”

He had barely finished speaking when an officer in the army, Huan Ji, offered himself as messenger, saying, “I am an old friend of Liu Biao. I volunteer to take the mission.”

Sun Ce agreed. So Huan Ji went, and peace was discussed.

Liu Biao told Huan Ji, saying, “The body is already laid in a coffin and ready to be delivered as soon as Huang Zu returned. Let us both cease fighting and never again invade each other’s territories.”

Huan Ji thanked him and took his leave.

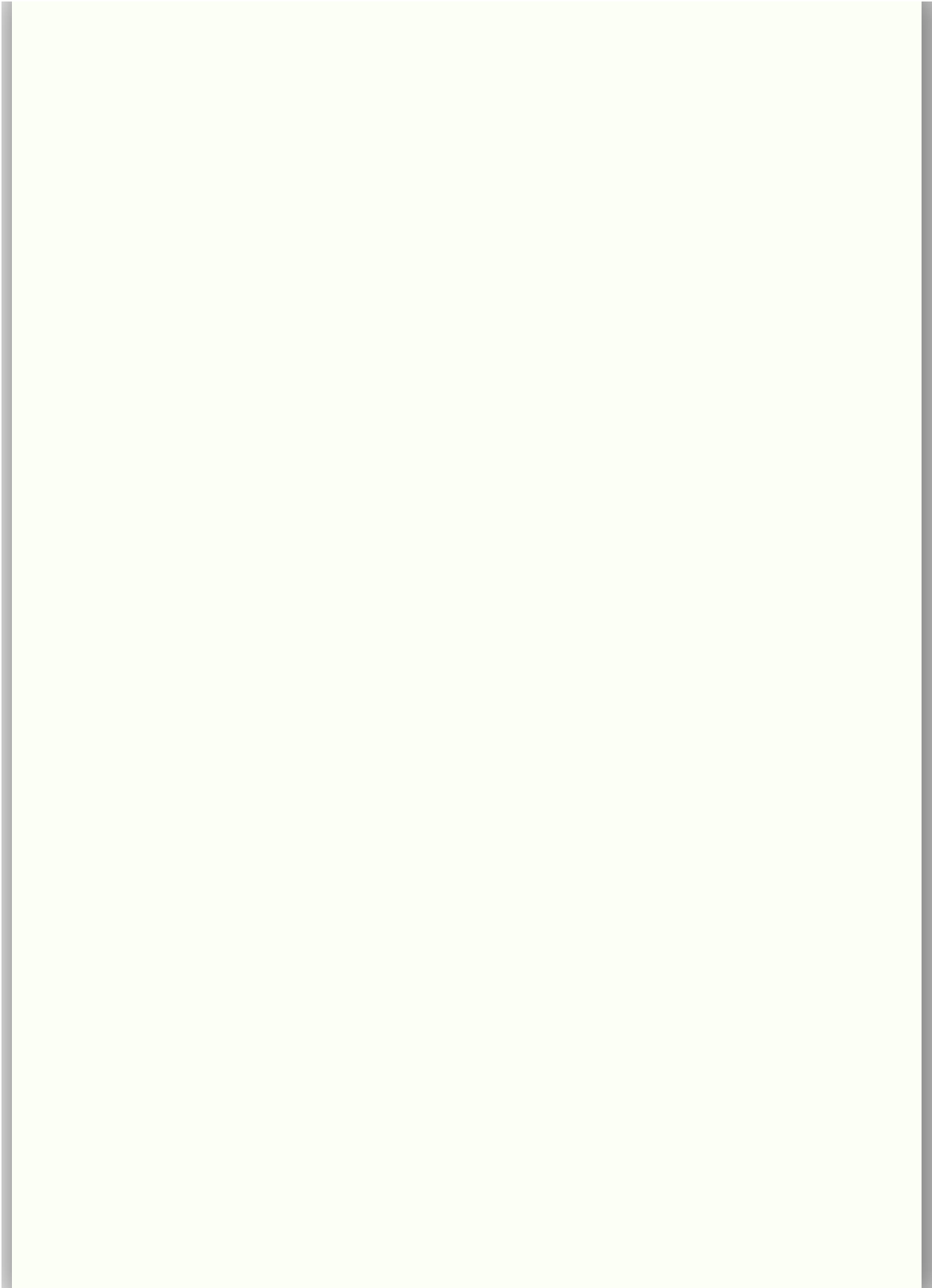
But as Huan Ji went down the steps, Kuai Liang suddenly broke in, saying, “No, no! Let me speak, and I will see to it that not a single enemy can survive. I pray you first put this man to death and then to employ my means.”

Pursuing his enemy, Sun Jian dies;

On a peaceful mission, Huan Ji is threatened.

The fate of the ambassador will be disclosed in a later chapter.





Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act II

CHAPTER 8

WANG YUN PREPARES THE CHAINING SCHEME; DONG ZHUO RAGES AT THE PHOENIX PAVILION.

This is what Kuai Liang said: “Sun Jian is now gone, and his children are but youths. Seize this moment of weakness to break into the South Land, and it is yours in one beat of the drum. If you return the corpse and make peace, you give them time to grow powerful, and evil will ensue in Jingzhou.”

“How can I leave Huang Zu in their hands?” said Liu Biao.

“Why not sacrifice this blundering warrior for a region?”

“But he is my dear friend, and to abandon him is wrong.”

So Huan Ji was allowed to return to his own side with the understanding that Sun Jian’s dead body should be given in exchange. Sun Ce freed his prisoner, brought away his father’s coffin, and the fighting ceased. Sun Jian was interred in the plains of Que. When the ceremonies were over, Sun Ce led his army home again.

In Changsha, one of the territories south of the Great River, Sun Ce set himself to the task of ruling well. Being humble and generous, he invited to his side humans of wisdom and valor, and so bore himself that all the best and bravest of the country gathered about him.

Meanwhile, Dong Zhuo, at Capital Changan, when he heard of the death of the turbulent Sun Jian, said, "An evil that pressed hard upon my heart has been removed!" He asked what children Sun Jian had left, and when they told him the eldest was but seventeen, he dismissed all anxiety from his thoughts.

From this time forward his arrogance and domineering spirit waxed worse and worse. He styled himself "Imperial Rector", a name full of honor, and in all his behavior aped imperial state. He created his younger brother, Dong Min, Lord of Huazhou and made him Commander of the Left Army. A nephew, Dong Huang, was made Court Counselor and placed in command of the Palace Guard, and everyone of his clan, young or old, was ennobled.

Eighty miles from the capital, Dong Zhuo laid out a city called Meiwo, an exact replica of Changan, with its palaces, granaries, treasuries, and magazines, and employed a quarter of a million people to build it. Here, he accumulated supplies sufficient for twenty years. He selected eight hundred of the most beautiful maidens and sent them to dwell in his new city. The stores of wealth in every form were incalculable. All his family and retainers found quarters in this city.

Dong Zhuo visited his city at intervals of a month or so, and every visit was like an imperial progress, with booths by the roadside to refresh the officials and courtiers who attended him to the northwest Royal Gate and saw him start.

On one occasion, Dong Zhuo spread a great feast for all those assembled to witness his departure; and while it was in progress, there arrived a large number of rebels from the north who had voluntarily surrendered. Dong Zhuo had them brought before him as he sat at the table and meted out to them wanton cruelties. The hands of this one were lopped

off, the feet of that; one had his eyes gouged out; another lost his tongue. Some were boiled to death. Shrieks of agony arose to the very heavens, and the courtiers were faint with terror. But the author of the misery ate and drank, chatted and smiled as if nothing was going on.

Another day, Dong Zhuo was presiding at a great gathering of officials who were seated in two long rows. After the wine had gone up and down several times, Lu Bu entered and whispered a few words in his master's ear.

Dong Zhuo smiled and said, "He was always so. Take Minister of Works Zhang Wan outside!"

The others all turned pale. In a little time, a serving man brought the head of their fellow guest on a red dish and showed it to their host. They nearly died with fright.

"Do not fear," said Dong Zhuo, smiling. "Minister Zhang Wan was in league with Yuan Shu to assassinate me. A letter he wrote fell by mistake into the hands of my son, so I have had him put to death. You gentlemen, who have no reason, need have no fear."

The officials hastened to disperse. One of them, Minister of the Interior Wang Yun, who had witnessed all this, returned to his palace very pensive and much distressed. The same evening, a bright moonlight night, he took his staff and went strolling in his private garden. Standing near one of the creeper trellises, he gazed up at the sky, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. Suddenly, he heard a rustle in the Peony Pavilion and someone sighing deeply. Stealthily creeping near, he saw there one of the household singing girls named Diao Chan.

This maiden had been brought up in his palace, where she had been taught to sing and dance. At twenty-one, she was a pretty and clever girl whom Wang Yun regarded more as a daughter than a dependent.

After listening for some time, Wang Yun suddenly called out, "What mischief are you up to there, you naughty girl?"

The maiden dropped on her knees in terror, saying, "Would thy unworthy handmaid dare to do anything wrong?"

"Then what are you sighing about out here in the darkness?"

"May thy handmaid speak from the bottom of her heart?"

"Tell me the whole truth. Do not conceal anything."

And the girl said, "Thy handmaid has been the recipient of bountiful kindness. She has been taught to sing and dance and been treated so kindly that were she torn in pieces for her lord's sake, it would not repay a thousandth part. She has noticed lately that her lord's brows have been knit in distress and knows it is on account of the state troubles. But she has not dared to ask. This evening, he seemed sadder than ever, and she was miserable on her lord's account. But she did not know she would be seen. Could she be of any use, she would not shrink from a myriad deaths."

A sudden idea came to Wang Yun, and he struck the ground with his staff. And he said, "Who would think that the fate of Han lay in your palm? Come with me!"

The girl followed him into the house. There he dismissed all the waiting attendants, placed Diao Chan on a chair, and bowed before her. She was frightened and threw herself on the ground, asking in terror what it all meant.

Said Wang Yun, "You can sympathize with the people of Han!" And the fount of his tears opened afresh.

"My lord, as thy handmaid said just now, use her in any way: thy handmaid will never shrink," said the girl.

Wang Yun knelt, saying, "The people are on the brink of destruction, the prince and his officers are in jeopardy, and you, you are the only savior. That wretch, Dong Zhuo, wants to depose the Emperor, and not a person among us can find means to stop him. Now he has a son, a bold warrior it is true, but both father and son have a weakness for beauty, and I am going to use what I may call the 'chaining plan'.

"I shall first propose you in marriage to Lu Bu and then, after you are betrothed, I shall present you to Dong Zhuo, and you will take every opportunity to force them asunder and turn sway their countenances from each other, cause the son to kill his adopted father, and so put an end to the great evil. Thus, you may restore the altars of the land that it may live again. All this lies within your power. Will you do it?"

"Thy handmaid has promised not to recoil from death itself. You may use my poor self in any way, and I must do my best."

"But if this gets abroad then we are all lost!"

"Fear not," said she. "If thy handmaid does not show gratitude, may she perish beneath a myriad swords!"

"Thank you, thank you!" said Wang Yun.

Then, Wang Yun took from the family treasury many pearls and bade a cunning jeweler make therewith a fine golden headdress, which was sent as a present to Lu Bu. He was delighted and came to thank the donor. When Lu Bu arrived, he was met at the gate by Wang Yun himself and within found a table full of dainties for his delectation. He was conducted into a private apartment and placed in the seat of honor.

Lu Bu said, "I am but a simple officer in the palace of a minister. You are an exalted officer of state. Why am I treated thus?"

“Because in the whole land there is no hero your equal. Poor I bow not to an officer’s rank; poor I bow to his ability.”

This gratified Lu Bu mightily, and his host continued to praise and flatter and ply him with wine and to talk of the virtues of the Prime Minister and his henchman.

Lu Bu laughed and drank huge goblets.

Presently, most of the attendants were sent away, only a few kept to press the guest to drink.

When the guest was very mellow, Wang Yun suddenly said, “Let her come in!”

Soon appeared two attendants, dressed in white, leading between them the exquisite and fascinating Diao Chan.

“Who is this?” said Lu Bu, startled into sobriety.

“This is my little girl, Diao Chan. You will not be annoyed at my familiarity, will you? But you have been so very friendly, I thought you would like to see her.”

Wang Yun bade Diao Chan present a goblet of wine, and her eyes met those of the warrior.

Wang Yun, feigning intoxication, said, “My child begs you, General, to take a cup or two. We all depend upon you, all our house.”

Lu Bu begged Diao Chan to sit down. She pretended to wish to retire.

Her master pressed her to remain, saying, “The General is a dear friend. You may stay.” So she took a seat modestly near her master.

Lu Bu kept his gaze fixed upon the maid, while he swallowed cup after cup of wine.

“I should like to present her to you as a handmaid. Would you accept?” said Wang Yun.

The guest started up. "If that is so, you may rely upon my abject gratitude," said Lu Bu.

"We will choose a propitious day ere long and send her to the palace."

Lu Bu was overjoyed. He could not keep his eyes off Diao Chan, and loving glances flashed from her liquid eyes.

However, the time came for the guest to leave, and Wang Yun said, "I would ask you to remain the night, but the Prime Minister might suspect something."

Lu Bu thanked him again and again and departed.

Some few days later, when Wang Yun was at court and Lu Bu was absent, Wang Yun bowed low before Dong Zhuo and said, "I wish that you would deign to come to dine at my lowly cottage: could your noble thought bend that way?"

"Should you invite me, I would certainly hasten," was the reply.

Wang Yun thanked him. Then, Wang Yun went home and prepared in the reception hall a feast in which figured every delicacy from land and sea. Beautiful embroideries surrounded the chief seat in the center, and elegant curtains were hung within and without.

At noon next day, when Dong Zhuo arrived, Wang Yun met him at the gate in full court costume. Wang Yun stood by while Dong Zhuo stepped out of his chariot, and Dong Zhuo and a host of one hundred armed guards crowded into the hall. Dong Zhuo took his seat at the top, his suite fell into two lines right and left, and Wang Yun stood humbly at the lower end. Dong Zhuo bade his people conduct Wang Yun to a place beside himself.

Said Wang Yun, "The great Prime Minister's abundant virtue is as the high mountains. Neither of the ancient sages—Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou—could attain thereto."

Dong Zhuo smiled. They bore in the dishes and the wine, and the music began. Wang Yun plied his guest with assiduous flattery and studied deference. When it grew late and the wine had done its work, Dong Zhuo was invited to the inner chamber. So he sent away his guards and went.

Here, the host raised a goblet and drank to his guest, saying, "From my youth onward, I have understood something of astrology and have been studying the aspect of the heavens. I read that the days of Han are numbered, and that the great Prime Minister's merits command the regard of all the world, as when King Shun succeeded King Yao, and King Yu continued the work of King Shun, all by the strength of their own merits, conforming to the mind of Heaven and the desire of people."

"How dare I expect this?" said Dong Zhuo.

"From the days of old, those who walk in the way have replaced those who deviate therefrom; those who lack virtue have fallen before those who possess it. Can one escape fate?"

"If indeed the decree of Heaven devolves on me, you shall be held the first in merit!" said Dong Zhuo.

Wang Yun bowed. Then, lights were brought in and all the attendants were dismissed, save for the serving maids to hand the wine. So the evening went on.

Presently, Wang Yun said, "The music of these everyday musicians is too commonplace for your ear, but there happens to be in the house a little maid that might please you."

"Excellent!" said the guest.

Then, a curtain was lowered. The shrill tones of reed instruments rang through the room, and presently some attendants led forward Diao Chan, who then danced on the outside of the curtain.



A poem praises her:

For a palace this maiden was born,
So timid, so graceful, so slender,
Like a tiny bird flitting at morn
Over the dew-laden lily buds tender.
Were this exquisite maid only mine,
For never a mansion I'd pine.

Another poem runs thus:

The music falls, the dancer comes, a swallow gliding
in,
A dainty little damsel, soft as silk;
Her beauty captivates the guest yet saddens him
within,
For he must soon depart and leave her there.
She smiles; no gold could buy that smile, no other
smiled so,
No need to deck her form with jewels rare.
But when the dance is over and coy glances come and
go,
Then who shall be the chosen of the fair?



The dance ended. Dong Zhuo bade them lead the maiden in, and she came, bowing low as she approached him. He was much taken with her beauty and modest grace.

“Who is she?” said Dong Zhuo.

“A singing girl. Her name is Diao Chan.”

“Then can she sing?”

The master bade her sing, and she did so to the accompaniment of castanets.



There is a measure describing her youthful beauty:

You stand, a dainty maiden,
Your cherry lips so bright,
Your teeth so pearly white,
Your fragrant breath love-laden;
Yet is your tongue a sword;
Cold death is the reward
Of loving thee, O maiden!



Dong Zhuo was delighted and praised her warmly. She was told to present a goblet of wine to the guest which he took from her hands and then asked her age.

She replied, “Thy unworthy handmaid is twenty-one.”

“A perfect fairy!” said Dong Zhuo.

Then, Wang Yun rose and said, “If the Prime Minister would not mind, I should like to offer him this little maid.”

“How could I be grateful enough for such a kindness!”

“She would be most fortunate if she could be your servant,” said Wang Yun.

Dong Zhuo thanked his host warmly. Then, the orders were given to prepare a closed carriage and convey Diao Chan to the Prime Minister’s palace.

Soon after, Dong Zhuo took his leave, and Wang Yun accompanied him the whole way. After he had taken leave, Wang Yun mounted to ride homeward. Halfway, he met two lines of guards with red lamps who were escorting Lu Bu, who was on horseback and armed with his Trident Halberd.

Seeing Wang Yun, Lu Bu at once reined in, stopped, seized him by the sleeve, and said angrily, “You promised Diao Chan to me, and now you have given her to the Prime Minister: what foolery is this?”

Wang Yun checked him, saying, “This is no place to talk. I pray you come to my house.”

So they went together, and Wang Yun led Lu Bu into a private room. After the usual exchange of polite greetings, Wang Yun said, “Why do you find fault with me, General?”

“Somebody told me that you had sent Diao Chan to the Prime Minister’s palace in a covered carriage: what does it mean?”

“Of course, you do not understand. Yesterday, when I was at court, the Prime Minister told me he had something to talk to me about in my own house. So naturally, I prepared for his coming, and while we were at dinner

he said, 'I have heard something of a girl named Diao Chan whom you have promised to my son Lu Bu. I thought it was mere rumor so I wanted to ask if it was true. Beside, I should like to see her.' I could not say no, so she came in and made her bow to the lord of lords. Then, he said that it was a lucky day, and he would take her away with him and betroth her to you. Just think, Sir: when the Prime Minister had come himself, could I have stopped him?"

"You were not so very wrong," said Lu Bu. "But for a time I had misunderstood you. I owe you an apology."

"The girl has a small trousseau, which I will send as soon as she has gone over to your dwelling."

Lu Bu thanked him and went away.

Next day, Lu Bu went into the palace to find out the truth, but could hear nothing. Then, he made his way into the private quarters and questioned the maids. Presently, one told him that the Imperial Rector had brought home a new bedfellow the night before and was not up yet. Lu Bu was very angry. Next, he crept round behind his master's sleeping apartment.

By this time, Diao Chan had risen and was dressing her hair at the window. Looking out, she saw a long shadow fall across the little lake. She recognized the headdress, and peeping around she saw it was indeed no other than Lu Bu. Thereupon, she contracted her eyebrows, simulating the deepest grief, and with her dainty handkerchief she wiped her eyes again and again. Lu Bu stood watching her a long time.

Soon after, he went in to give morning greeting. Dong Zhuo was sitting in the reception room.

Seeing his henchman, Dong Zhuo asked, "Is there anything new?"

"Nothing," was the reply.

Lu Bu waited while Dong Zhuo took his morning meal. As he stood beside his master, he glanced over at the curtain and saw a woman there behind the screen showing a half-face from time to time and throwing amorous glances at him. He felt it was his beloved, and his thoughts flew to her. Presently, Dong Zhuo noticed his expression and began to feel suspicious.

"If there is nothing, you may go," said Dong Zhuo. Lu Bu sulkily withdrew.

Dong Zhuo now thought of nothing but his new mistress and for more than a month neglected all affairs, devoting himself entirely to pleasure. Once, he was a little indisposed, and Diao Chan was constantly at his side, never even undressing to show her solicitude. She gratified his every whim. Dong Zhuo grew more and more fond of her.

One day, Lu Bu went to inquire of his father's health. Dong Zhuo was asleep, and Diao Chan was sitting at the head of his couch. Leaning forward, she gazed at the visitor, with one hand pointed to her heart, the other at Dong Zhuo asleep, and her tears fell. Lu Bu felt heartbroken. Dong Zhuo drowsily opened his eyes, and seeing his son's gaze fixed on something behind him, he turned over and saw who it was.

He angrily rebuked his son, saying, "Dare you make love to my beauty?" He told the servants to turn Lu Bu out, shouting, "Never let him enter here again!"

Lu Bu went off home very wrath. Meeting Li Ru, he told Li Ru the cause of his anger.

The adviser hastened to see his master and said, "Sir, you aspire to be ruler of the empire. Why then, for a small fault, do you blame the General? If he turns against you, it is all over."

"Then what can I do?" said Dong Zhuo.

"Recall him tomorrow, treat him well, overwhelm him with gifts and fair words, and all will be well."

So Dong Zhuo did so. He sent for Lu Bu and was very gracious and said, "I was irritable and hasty yesterday, owing to my illness, and I wronged you, I know. Forgive me."

He gave Lu Bu three hundred ounces of gold and twenty rolls of brocade. And so the quarrel was made up. But though Lu Bu's body was with his adopted father, Dong Zhuo, his heart was with his promised bride, Diao Chan.

Dong Zhuo, having quite recovered, went to court again, and Lu Bu followed him as usual. One day, seeing Dong Zhuo deep in conversation with the Emperor, Lu Bu, armed as he was, went out of the Palace and rode off to his chief's residence. He tied up his steed at the entrance and, halberd in hand, went to the private apartment to seek his love. He found Diao Chan, and she told him to go out into the garden, where she would join him soon. He went, taking his halberd with him, and he leaned against the rail of the Phoenix Pavilion to wait for Diao Chan.

After a long time, she appeared, swaying gracefully as she made her way under the drooping willows and parting the flowers as she passed. She was exquisite, a perfect fairy from the Palace of the Moon.

Tears were in her eyes as she came up and said, "Though I am not the Minister's real daughter, he treated me yet as his own child. The desire of my life was fulfilled when he plighted me to you. But oh! to think of the wickedness of the Prime Minister, stealing my poor self as he did. I suffered so much. I longed to die, only that I had not told you the real truth. So I lived on, bearing my shame as best as I could. Now that I have seen you, I can end it all. My poor sullied body is no longer fit to serve a hero. I can die before your eyes and so prove how true I am!"

Thus speaking, she seized the curving rail and started into the lily pond. Lu Bu caught her in his strong arms and wept as he held her close.

"I knew it: I always knew your heart!" he sobbed. "Only we never had a chance to speak."

She threw her arms about Lu Bu. "If I cannot be your wife in this life, I will in the ages to come," she whispered.

"If I do not marry you in this life, I am no hero," said he.

"Every day is a year long. O pity me! Rescue me! My lord!"

"I have only stolen away for a brief moment, and I am afraid that old rebel will suspect something, so I must not stay too long," said Lu Bu.

Diao Chan clung to his robe, saying, "If you fear the old thief so much, I shall never see another sunrise!"

Lu Bu stopped. "Give me a little time to think," said he. And he picked up his halberd to go.

"In the deep seclusion of the harem, I heard the stories of your prowess. You were the man who excelled all others. Little did I think that you of all heroes would rest content under the dominion of another." And tears rained again!

A wave of shame flooded his face. Leaning his halberd against the railing, he turned and clasped the girl to his breast, soothing her with fond words. The lovers held each other close, swaying to and fro with emotion. They could not bring themselves to say farewell.

In the meantime, Dong Zhuo missed his henchman, and doubt filled his heart. Hastily taking leave of the Emperor, he mounted his chariot and returned to his palace. There at the gate stood Lu Bu's well known steed, Red Hare, riderless. Dong Zhuo questioned the doorkeepers, and they told him the general was within. He sent away his attendants and went alone to the private apartments. Lu Bu was not there. He called to Diao Chan, but there was no reply. He asked where she was, and the waiting maids told him she was in the garden among the flowers.

So Dong Zhuo went into the garden, and there he saw the lovers in the pavilion in most tender talk. Lu Bu's Trident Halberd was leaning on the railing beside him.

A howl of rage escaped Dong Zhuo and startled the lovers. Lu Bu turned, saw who it was, and ran away. Dong Zhuo drew up the halberd and ran in pursuit. But Lu Bu was fleet of foot, while his master was very stout. Seeing no hope of catching the runaway, Dong Zhuo hurled the halberd. Lu Bu fended it off, and it fell to the ground. Dong Zhuo picked it up again and ran on. But by this time Lu Bu was far ahead. Just as Dong Zhuo was running out at the garden gate, he dashed full-tilt against another man running in, and down he went.

Surged up his wrath within him as the billows
heavenward leap.

Crashed his unwieldy body to earth in a shapeless
heap.

We shall presently see who the other runner was.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act II

CHAPTER 9

LU BU KILLS DONG ZHUO FOR WANG YUN; LI JUE ATTACKS THE CAPITAL ON JIA XU'S ADVICE.

The person who collided with the irate Dong Zhuo was his most trusty adviser Li Ru. Li Ru had not fallen in spite of the shock and at once scrambled to help Dong Zhuo to regain his feet and led him inside to the library, where they sat down.

“What were you coming about?” said Dong Zhuo.

“Happening to be passing your gates, I heard that you had gone into your private garden to look for your adopted son. Then came Lu Bu, running and crying out that you wanted to kill him, and I was coming in as fast as I could to intercede for him when I accidentally collided with you. I am very sorry! I deserve death.”

“The wretch! How could I bear to see him toying with my fair one? I will be the death of him yet!”

“Your Graciousness is making a mistake. It is the ‘plucked tassel’ story over again. But if you remember the banquet of old time where all guests were to tear the tassels of their hats. In that banquet, King Zhuang of Chu made no fuss about the liberties taken with his queen, although the hat-tassel in her hand betrayed the culprit Jiang Xiong. His restraint stood him good stead, for the same Jiang Xiong saved his life when he was hemmed in by the soldiers of Qin.

“After all, Diao Chan is only a handmaid, but Lu Bu is your trustiest friend and most dreaded commander. If you took this chance to make the

girl over to him, your kindness would win his undying gratitude. I beg you, Sir, to think over it well.”

Dong Zhuo hesitated a long time; he sat, murmuring to himself. Presently, he said, “What you say is right. I must think over it.”

Li Ru felt satisfied. He took leave of his master and went away. Dong Zhuo went to his private rooms and called for Diao Chan.

“What were you doing there with Lu Bu?” said he.

She began to weep, saying, “Thy handmaid was in the garden among the flowers, when he rushed in on me. I was frightened and ran away. He asked why I ran away from a son of the family and pursued me right to the Phoenix Pavilion, where you saw us. He had that halberd in his hand the whole time. I felt he was a vicious man and would force me to his will, so I tried to throw myself into the lily pond, but he caught me in his arms and held me so that I was helpless. Luckily, just at that moment, you came and saved my life!”

“Suppose I send you to him,” said Dong Zhuo.

Stunned, she wailed profusely, “What have thy handmaid done? My honor of serving Your Highness could not bear to be given to a mere underling! Never! I would rather die!” And with this, she snatched down a dagger hanging on the wall to kill herself.

Dong Zhuo plucked it from her hand and, throwing his arms about her, and cried, “I was only joking!”

She lay back on his breast, hiding her face and sobbing bitterly. “This is the doing of that Li Ru,” said she. “He is much too thick with Lu Bu. He suggested that, I know. Little he cares for the Imperial Rector’s reputation or my life. Oh! I could eat him alive!”

“Do you think I could bear to lose you?” said Dong Zhuo.

“Though you love me, I must not stay here. That Lu Bu will try to ruin me if I do. I fear him!”

“We will go to Meiwo tomorrow, you and I, and we will be happy together and have no cares.”

She dried her tears and thanked him.

Next day, Li Ru came again to persuade Dong Zhuo to send the damsel to Lu Bu. “This is a propitious day,” said Li Ru.

“He and I, standing in the relation of father and son: I cannot very well do that,” said Dong Zhuo. “But I will say no more about his fault. You may tell him so and soothe him as well as you can.”

“You are not being beguiled by the woman, are you?” said Li Ru.

Dong Zhuo colored, saying, “Would you like to give your wife to somebody else? Do not talk about this any further. It would be best not to!”

Li Ru left the chamber. When he got outside, he cast his eyes up to heaven, saying, “We are dead people, slain by the hand of this girl!”



When a scholar of history reached this episode, he wrote a verse or two:

Just introduce a woman,
Conspiracies succeed;
Of soldiers, or their weapons,
There really is no need.
They fought their bloody battles,
And doughty deeds were done;
But in a garden summer house
The victory was won.



The order was given to journey to Meiwo, and the whole body of officers assembled to add luster to the start. Diao Chan, from her carriage, saw Lu Bu among the crowd. She at once dropped her eyes and assumed an appearance of deepest melancholy. After the cavalcade started and when her carriage had almost disappeared in the distance, the disappointed lover reined in his steed on a mount whence he could watch the dust that rose around it. Unutterable sadness filled his heart.

Suddenly, a voice said, "Why do you not accompany the Prime Minister, General, instead of standing here and sighing?" It was Wang Yun. "I have been confined to the house by illness these few days," continued he, "so I have not seen you. But I had to struggle out today to see the Prime Minister set off. This meeting is most fortunate. But why were you sighing?"

"Just on account of that daughter of yours," said Lu Bu.

Feigning great astonishment, Wang Yun said, "So long a time and yet not given to you!"

"The old ruffian has fallen in love with her himself!"

"Surely this cannot be true."

Lu Bu related the whole story while Wang Yun listened, silent but stamping on the ground as with irritation and perplexity.

After a long time, Wang Yun said, "I did not think he was such a beast!"

Taking Lu Bu by the hand, Wang Yun said, "Come to my house, and we will talk it over."

So they went away together to the house and retired to a secret room. After some refreshments, Lu Bu told the whole story of the episode in the Phoenix Pavilion just as it happened.

Wang Yun said, "He seems to have corrupted my little girl and has stolen your wife. He will be an object of shame and ridicule to the whole world. And those who do not laugh at him will laugh at you and me. Alas! I am old and powerless and can do nothing. More pitied than blamed! But you, General, you are a warrior, the greatest hero in the world. Yet you have been put to this shame and exposed to this contempt!"

A wave of fierce wrath rolled up in Lu Bu. Banging the table, he shouted and roared.

His host ostentatiously tried to calm him, saying, "I forgot myself. I should not have spoken like that. Do not be so angry, I pray!"

"I will kill the wretch, I swear it! In no other way can I wash away my shame."

"No, no! Do not say such a thing," said Wang Yun, putting his hand over the other's mouth. "You will bring trouble on poor me and my family!"

"When one is born great, one cannot be patient for long under another person's domination!" said Lu Bu.

"It needs someone greater than the Prime Minister to limit the scope of such talents as yours."

Lu Bu said, "I would not mind killing the old wretch were it not for the relation in which we stand. I fear to provoke the hostile criticism of posterity."

Wang Yun shook his head, saying, "Your name is Lu Bu; his is Dong Zhuo. Where was the paternal feeling when he threw the halberd at you?"

“I would have been misled, had you not said that!” said Lu Bu hotly.

Wang Yun saw the effect of his words and continued, “It would be a loyal deed to restore the House of Han, and history would hand down your name to posterity perpetually fragrant. If you lend your aid to Dong Zhuo, you will be a traitor and your name will be tainted through all ages.”

Lu Bu rose from his place and bowed to Wang Yun. “I have decided,” said he. “You need not fear, Sir.”

“But yet you may fail and bring upon yourself misfortune,” said Wang Yun.

Lu Bu drew his dagger, pricking his arm, and swearing by the blood that flowed.

Wang Yun fell on his knees and thanked him. “Then the Han sacrifices will not be cut off, and you will be their savior. But this must remain a secret, and I will tell you how the plot shall be worked out.”

Lu Bu took leave with great emotion.

Wang Yun took into his confidence two colleagues, Court Administrator Shisun Rui and Imperial Commander Huang Wan.

Shisun Rui said, “The moment is favorable. The Emperor has just recovered from his illness, and we can dispatch an able talker to Meiwo to persuade Dong Zhuo to come here to discuss affairs. Meanwhile, we will obtain a secret decree as authority for Lu Bu to lay an ambush just inside the Palace gates to kill Dong Zhuo as he enters. This is the best plan to adopt.”

“But who would dare to go?” said Huang Wan.

“Li Su, General of the Imperial Tiger Army, would go. He belongs to the same region as Lu Bu and is very angry with the Prime Minister for not advancing him. His going would assure us the plan would be completed.”

“Good,” said Wang Yun. “Let us see what Lu Bu thinks of it.”

When Lu Bu was consulted, he told them that it was Li Su’s persuasion that had led him to kill Ding Yuan, his former benefactor. “If Li Su refuses this mission, I will kill him,” said Lu Bu.

So they sent for Li Su. When he arrived, Lu Bu said, “Formerly, you talked me into killing Ding Yuan and going over to Dong Zhuo. Now we find Dong Zhuo means evil for the Emperor and is an oppressor of the people. His iniquities are many, and he is hated by gods and humans. You go to Meiwo, say you have a command from the Emperor to summon the Prime Minister to the Palace. He will come, and he will be put to death. You will have the credit of being loyal and restoring the Hans. Will you undertake this?”

“I also wish to slay him,” was the reply. “But I could not find anyone to assist me. How can I hesitate? Your intervention is directly from Heaven!”

And Li Su snapped an arrow in twain as register of his oath.

“If this succeeds, what glorious rank will be yours!” said Wang Yun.

Next day, Li Su, with a small escort, set out for Meiwo and announced himself as bearer of a decree. He was conducted into Dong Zhuo’s presence. After he had made his obeisance, Dong Zhuo asked what the decree was.

“His Majesty has recovered and wishes his ministers to meet him in the Palace to consider the question of his abdication in your favor. That is what this summons means.”

“What does Wang Yun think of the scheme?”

“Wang Yun has already begun the construction of the Terrace of Abdication and only awaits my lord’s arrival.”

“Last night, I dreamed a dragon coiled round my body,” said Dong Zhuo, greatly pleased, “and now I get these happy tidings! I must not neglect the opportunity.”

So Dong Zhuo gave instructions to his four trusted generals for the safekeeping of his city: Li Jue, Guo Si, Fan Chou, and Zhang Ji were to guard Meiwo with three thousand troops of the Flying Bear Army. Then, Dong Zhuo announced his intention of starting off on the morrow.

“When I am Emperor, you shall be Commander of Capital District,” said he.

“Your minister thanks you,” said Li Su.

Dong Zhuo went to bid farewell to his ninety-year-old mother.

“Whither are you going, my son?” asked she.

“I go to receive the abdication of Han; soon you will be the Empress Dowager!”

“I have been feeling nervous and creepy these few days. It is a bad sign.”

“Anyone about to become the Mother of the State must have premonitions,” said her son. He left her with these words.

Just before starting, he said to Diao Chan, "When I am Emperor, you shall be Lady of the Palace."

She bowed low, thanking him, but she knew and inwardly rejoiced.

Dong Zhuo went out, mounted his carriage, and began his journey to Capital Changan with an imposing escort. Less than ten miles on, the wheel of his carriage broke. He left it and mounted a horse. Another ten miles, and the horse snorted and neighed, threw up his head, and snapped the reins.

Dong Zhuo turned to Li Su and asked what these things portended.

"It means that you are going to receive the abdication of the Hans, which is to renew all things: to mount the jeweled chariot and sit in the golden saddle."

And Dong Zhuo was convinced and pleased with this answer. During the second day's journey, a violent gale sprang up, and the sky became covered with a thick mist.

"What does this mean?" said Dong Zhuo.

The wily Li Su had an interpretation for this also, saying, "You are ascending to the place of the dragon: there must be bright light and lurid vapor to dignify your majestic approach."

Dong Zhuo had no more doubts. He presently arrived and found many officials waiting without the city gate to receive him, all but Li Ru, who was ill and unable to leave his chamber. He entered and proceeded to his own palace, where Lu Bu came to congratulate him.

"When I sit on the throne, you shall command the whole armies of the empire, horse and foot," said Dong Zhuo.

That night, Dong Zhuo slept in the midst of his escort. In the suburbs that evening, some children at play were singing a little ditty, and the words drifted into the bedchamber on the wind:

“The grass in the meadow looks fresh now and green,
Yet wait but ten days, not a blade will be seen.”

The song sounded ominous, but Li Su was again prepared with a happy interpretation: “It only means that the Lius are about to disappear, and the Dongs to be exalted!”

Next morning, at the first streak of dawn, Dong Zhuo prepared for his appearance at court. On the way, he saw a Daoist, dressed in a black robe and wearing a white turban, who carried in his hand a tall staff with a long strip of white cloth attached. At each end of the cloth was drawn a mouth.

“What is the meaning of this?” said Dong Zhuo.

“He is a madman,” said Li Su, and he told the guards to drive the fellow away.

Dong Zhuo went in and found all the officials in court dress lining the road. Li Su walked beside his carriage, a sword in his hand. When Li Su reached the north gate of the Forbidden City, he found the soldiers of Dong Zhuo drawn up outside and only the pushers of the Palace carriage, a twenty or so, were allowed to proceed further.

When Dong Zhuo arrived near the Reception Hall, he saw that Wang Yun and all the other officials standing at the door were armed.

“Why are they all armed?” said Dong Zhuo to Li Su. Li Su was silent as he helped push the carriage forward swiftly to the entrance.

Suddenly, Wang Yun shouted, “The rebel is here! Where are the executioners?”

At this call, sprang from both sides soldiers armed with halberds and spears who attacked Dong Zhuo. But the breastplate he usually wore protected him, and spears could not penetrate it.

He sank down in the carriage, wounded in the arms, calling loudly for his son, “Where is Lu Bu?”

“Here, and with a decree to deal with a rebel!” said Lu Bu, as he appeared in front of his “father.”

Thereupon, he thrust his Trident Halberd through the victim’s throat. Then, Li Su hacked off the head and held it up.

Lu Bu, his left hand holding his halberd, thrust his right hand into his bosom, whence he drew the decree, crying, “The decree was to slay the rebel Dong Zhuo—no other!”

The whole assembly shouted, “*Wansui!* Live forever! O Emperor!”



A sympathetic poet has written a few lines in pity:

Await the time, O noble, and be king,
Or failing, reap the solace riches bring;
Heaven never is partial, but severely just,
Meiwo stood strong, yet now it lies in dust.



The lust for blood awakened, Lu Bu urged further slaughter, crying, “Li Ru has been the main initiator for Dong Zhuo in many crimes! Who shall go and kill him?”

Li Su volunteered to go in search of him. But just then, a shouting was heard at the gates, and it told them that a household servant had brought Li Ru in bonds. Wang Yun ordered his immediate execution in the marketplace.

Dong Zhuo's head was exposed in a crowded thoroughfare (AD 192). He was very fat, and the guards made torches by sticking splints into the body, spilling the corpse's grease over the ground. Passersby pelted the head and spurned the body with their feet.

Wang Yun ordered a force of fifty thousand under Lu Bu, Huangfu Song, and Li Su to destroy Meiwo. Learning the news of their master, Li Jue, Guo Si, Fan Chou, and Zhang Ji fled west swiftly through the night with their Flying Bear Army to Liangzhou Region.

When arriving at Meiwo, Lu Bu's first deed was to take Diao Chan into his charge. Then they slew every member of the Dong family, sparing none, not even Dong Zhuo's aged mother. The heads of Dong Zhuo's brother Dong Min and his nephew Dong Huang were publicly displayed in the marketplace.

In Meiwo were hidden many young ladies of good families; these were set free. All properties were confiscated. The wealth was enormous: several hundred thousand ounces of gold, millions of silver coins, pearls, gems, silks, velvets, furs, and grain stores.

When they returned to report success, Wang Yun rewarded and feasted the soldiers. Banquets were held in the Ministry Hall to which all the officials were invited. They drank and congratulated each other.

While the feasting was in progress, it was announced that someone had come and was wailing over Dong Zhuo's corpse exposed in the marketplace.

"Dong Zhuo has been put to death," said Wang Yun angrily. "Everybody is glad to be rid of him, and yet one is found to lament over him. Who is this?"

So Wang Yun gave orders to arrest the mourner and bring him in. Soon he was brought in, and when they saw him, all were startled. For he was no other than Court Counselor Cai Yong.

Wang Yun spoke to Cai Yong angrily, "Dong Zhuo has been put to death as a rebel, and all the land rejoices. You, a Han minister, instead of rejoicing, weep for him. Why?"

Cai Yong confessed his fault, saying, "I am without talent yet know what is right. I am not the man who turns my back on the dynasty and toward Dong Zhuo. Yet once I experienced his kindness, and I could not help mourning for him. I know my fault is grave, but I pray you regard the reasons. If you will leave my head and only cut off my feet, you may use me to continue the History of Han, whereby I may have the good fortune to be allowed to expiate my fault."

All were sorry for Cai Yong, for he was a man of great talents, and they begged that he might be spared.

The Imperial Guardian, Ma Midi, secretly interceded for him, saying, "Cai Yong is famous as a scholar, and he can write glorious history, and it is inadvisable to put to death a man renowned for rectitude without consideration."

But in vain, for the High Minister was now strong and obdurate.

Wang Yun said, “Centuries ago, Emperor Wu spared Sima Qian and employed him on the annals, with the result that many slanderous stories have been handed down to us. This is a trying period of great perplexity, and we dare not let a specious fellow like this wield his pen in criticism of those about the court of a youthful prince and abuse us as he will.”

Remonstrance and appeal being in vain, Ma Midi retired.

But he said to his colleagues, “Is Wang Yun, then, careless of the future? Worthy people are the mainstay of the state; laws are the canons of action. To destroy the mainstay and nullify the laws is to hasten destruction!”

As was just said, Wang Yun was obdurate. Cai Yong, whose offense was an expression of gratitude was thrown into prison and there strangled. The people of that day wept for Cai Yong, for they refused to see any offense in what he had done, and death was a harsh punishment.



Dong Zhuo, the dictator,
Tyrannized the state,
Fell and his sole mourner
Shared his direful fate.
Zhuge Liang in seclusion
Was content to dream,
Felt his worth and never
Helped a traitor's scheme.



Those generals—Li Jue, Guo Si, Fan Chou, and Zhang Ji—whom Dong Zhuo had left to guard Meiwo fled when their master was slain and went west into the county of Shanxi in Liangzhou Region. Thence they sent in a memorial entreating amnesty. But Wang Yun would not hear of it.

“The four of them were the chief instruments of Dong Zhuo’s aggressions. Now though a general amnesty was proclaimed, these men should be excluded from its benefit,” said Wang Yun.

The messenger returned and told the four there was no hope of pardon and they could only flee.

Then their adviser, Jia Xu, said, “If we throw away our arms and flee singly, then we shall fall easy victims to any village magistrate who may seize us. Rather, let us cajole the people of Shanxi to throw in their lot with us and make a sudden onslaught on the capital and so avenge Dong Zhuo. If we succeed, we control the court and the empire. There will be enough time to run away if we fail.”

The plan was adopted, and they spread abroad the story that Wang Yun intended to massacre the region. Having thus thrown the people into a state of terror, they went a step further and said, “There is no advantage in dying for nothing. Join us and revolt!”

So they cajoled the people into joining them and gathered a host equal to one hundred thousand. This horde was divided into four parts, and they all set out to raid Capital Changan. On the way, they fell in with a son-in-law of their late chief, Imperial Commander Niu Fu, who marched five thousand troops from Xiliang. Niu Fu had set out to avenge his father-in-law, and he became the Van Leader of the horde.

As the Liangzhou troops advanced, the news came to Wang Yun, and he consulted Lu Bu.

“They are a lot of rats!” said Lu Bu. “Never mind how many there are of them. Be not in the least anxious!”

So Lu Bu and Li Su went to oppose them. The latter was in advance and met Niu Fu. They fought. Niu Fu was outmatched and retired after suffering a slaughter. But unexpectedly, Niu Fu returned in a night attack, found Li Su quite unprepared and drove Li Su’s force some ten miles, slaying many.

Li Su reported the defeat, and Lu Bu raged at him, saying, “You have sullied my reputation as a warrior and destroyed our fighting spirit!”

And Lu Bu put Li Su to death, exposing his head at the camp gate.

Next day, Lu Bu advanced his own force and engaged Niu Fu. He overwhelmed Niu Fu and drove him off. That night, Niu Fu called in his most trusted man, Hu Chier, to advise him.

Hu Chier said, “Lu Bu is too doughty a fighter for us to hope to overcome him. Our case is hopeless. Our best course is to desert these four generals, secrete their valuables, and leave the army with just a few of our followers.”

The plan of Hu Chier was adopted, and the two traitors and some others that very night packed up and made their way out of camp. They were only half a dozen. They came to a river and, while crossing, Hu Chier, tempted by the lust of wealth, slew his companion. Then he went to offer the head of Niu Fu to Lu Bu. Lu Bu inquired into the matter, and when a follower told him the truth, he put the double traitor Hu Chier to death.

Then, Lu Bu advanced against the rebels and fell in with Li Jue’s force. Without giving them time to form in battle, Lu Bu attacked. Horses curvetting and spears set, the army dashed in irresistibly, and Li Jue,

making no stand, fell back a long way. Li Jue took up a position under a hill fifteen miles away and thence sent to call his fellows to council.

Li Jue said, "Lu Bu, though brave in battle, is no strategist and so not really formidable. I will lead my troops to hold the mouth of the gorge, and every day I will incite him to attack, and when he comes toward me, General Guo Si can smite his rear, after the manner of Peng Yue when he fought against Chu. While thus I am alternating attack and retreat, Generals Fan Chou and Zhang Ji will march off in different directions toward Changan. Such an attack at two points must end both Wang Yun and Lu Bu."

They set themselves to carry out this scheme. As soon as Lu Bu reached the hills, a force of Li Jue came out to attack him. Lu Bu made an angry dash toward the enemy, who retired up the hills, whence they shot arrows and hurled stones like rain. Lu Bu's troops halted. At this moment, the report came that the rear was being attacked and there had appeared Guo Si. At once, Lu Bu wheeled toward the new enemy, but immediately the rolling drums gave the signal to retire, and Lu Bu could not come to blows with them. As he called in his army, the gongs clanged on the other side and his former opponent Li Jue came to attack his front. But before Lu Bu could join battle, his rear was again assaulted by Guo Si, who in his turn drew off immediately.

Thus Lu Bu was baited till his bosom was near-bursting with rage. The same tactics continued for several days. He could neither strike his enemies nor escape them. His troops had no rest.

In the midst of these distracting maneuvers, a messenger rode up in hot haste to report: "The capital is in imminent danger from a double-attack by Fan Chou and Zhang Ji!"

Lu Bu at once ordered a march to save the capital, which became a rout when both his opponents Li Jue and Guo Si came in pursuit. His loss was heavy.

He soon reached Changan and found the rebels there in enormous numbers and the city quite surrounded. Lu Bu's attack had but little effect, and as his temper became more savage under defeat, many of his soldiers went over to the rebels. He fell into deep melancholy.

Then, a remnant of Dong Zhuo's adherents still in the city, led by Li Meng and Wang Fang, began to lend aid to the attackers, and a few days later, they secretly opened the city gate, and the besiegers poured in. Lu Bu exerted himself to the utmost but could not stem the tide. At the head of some hundred horse, he dashed over to the Black Lock Gate and called out to Wang Yun, who was on the other side.

"The case is desperate now. Ride with me to a place of safety!"

Wang Yun replied, "If I am gifted with the spirit of the state, I shall succeed in restoring the tranquility which I desire. But if I have it not, then I offer my body as a sacrifice. I will not quail before dangers. Send my thanks to the noble supporters beyond the Pass for their efforts, and bid them remember their country!"

Lu Bu urged Wang Yun again and again, but Wang Yun would not leave. Soon, flames started up all over the city, and Lu Bu had to leave, abandoning his family to their fate. He fled to seek refuge with Yuan Shu.

Li Jue, Guo Si, and their fellow leaders gave full license to their ruffians, who robbed and murdered their fill. Many high officers perished. Ministers Chong Fu, Lu Kui, and Zhou Huan, and Imperial Commanders Cui Lie and Wang Qin all died in the fighting.

In time, the rebels penetrated to the inner part of the Palace, and the courtiers begged the Emperor to proceed to the Gate of Pervading Peace to try to quell the rioting.

At sight of the yellow umbrella, Li Jue and Fan Chou checked their armies, and they all shouted, “*Wansui!* Long life! O Emperor!”

The Emperor stood by the tower and addressed them, “Nobles, what means it that you enter the capital in this unruly manner and without my summons?”

The two leaders looked up and said, “Dong Zhuo, Your Majesty’s Prime Minister, has been slain by Wang Yun, and we are here to avenge him. We are no rebels, Sire. Let us only have Wang Yun, and we draw off our troops.”

Wang Yun was actually among the courtiers and at the Emperor’s side.

Hearing this demand, Wang Yun said, “The plan was made for the benefit of the Throne. But as this evil has grown therefrom, Your Majesty will not grudge losing me. I have brought about evil, and I will go down to these rebels.”

The Emperor was torn with sorrow and wavered. But the faithful minister leaped from the wall, crying, “Wang Yun is here!”

The two leaders drew their swords, crying, “For what crime was our master slain?”

“His crimes filled the heavens and covered the earth: no tongue can tell them. The day he died was a day of rejoicing in the whole city, as you well know,” said Wang Yun.

“And if he was guilty of some crime, what had we done not to be forgiven?”

“Seditious rebels, why bandy words? I am ready to die.”

And Wang Yun was slain at the foot of the tower.



Moved by the people's sufferings,
Vexed at his prince's grief,
Wang Yun compassed the traitor's death,
That they might find relief.
Everyone knows him a hero,
Leal to the state always:
Living he guarded the princely towers,
His soul keeps guard today.



Having done the loyal minister to death at the Emperor's feet, they proceeded to exterminate also his whole family. Everyone mourned.

Then said the ruffians to each other, "Having gone so far, what could be better than to make away with the Emperor and complete our scheme?"



The traitor condoned his crime,
Rebellion ought to cease;
But his licentious followers
Disturb the empire's peace.

The fate of the Emperor will be disclosed in the next chapter.



END OF ACT II

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT III:

SEDITION, MURDER, AND RETRIBUTION:

THE WRATH OF CAO CAO

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act III

CHAPTER 10

GATHERING ARMS, MA TENG MOVES TO RESCUE THE EMPEROR;
COMMANDING A FORCE, CAO CAO MARCHES TO AVENGE HIS
FATHER.

In the last chapter, the two arch-rebels, Li Jue and Guo Si, proposed to murder Emperor Xian, but their followers Zhang Ji and Fan Chou opposed this.

“No. The people will not approve of his death now. Restore him to power, and get the leaguers inside Changan’s control. Remove his supporters, and then we can compass his death. And the empire shall be in our hands.”

So they ceased the attack.

The Emperor again spoke from the tower, saying, “Why do you still remain? You have slain Wang Yun: now withdraw these soldiers.”

Then Li Jue and Guo Si replied, “Your servants desire rank-rewards for their good service to the dynasty.”

“And what ranks, Sirs?”

All four wrote their wishes and handed them up to the Emperor, who had no choice but to accede to the request, and they were created:

Li Jue was appointed General of the Flying Chariots, Lord of Chiyang, Commander of Capital District, and Court Administrator, and was granted Military Insignia.

Guo Si was appointed General of the Rear Army, Lord of Meiyang, and Court Administrator, and was granted Military Insignia.

Fan Chou was appointed General of the Right Army and Lord of Wanian.

Zhang Ji was appointed General of the Flying Cavalry and Lord of Pingyan.

Li Meng and Wang Fang, for opening the city gates, were appointed Imperial Commanders.

After receiving ranks of nobility, Li Jue and Guo Si thanked the Emperor, and went away to camp at Xunung, the suburb of Changan. Other rebel leaders also were gratified with ranks. And once more, the capital was free of troops.

Dong Zhuo's followers, having so far succeeded, did not forget their late leader. They sought his corpse for burial, but only a few fragments were discoverable. Then, they had sculptors engrave a statue of fragrant wood in his likeness, laid that out in proper form, and instituted a noble's sacrifices and prayers. The remains were dressed in the robes of a prince and laid in a princely coffin for burial. They selected Meiwo for his tomb and, having found an auspicious day, conveyed the coffin thither.

But a terrific thunderstorm came on at the time of inhumation, and the ground was flooded. The coffin was rived asunder, and the poor remains knocked out by thunders. A second time they buried the coffin, but a similar thing happened in the night. And yet a third time in another place, but the earth rejected the remains. Meanwhile, the thunder-fire had entirely

consumed them. So it may be said justly that Heaven was exceedingly angry with Dong Zhuo.

So now Li Jue and Guo Si wielded the real power of the scepter, and they were hard upon the people. They also removed the attendants from the Palace and replaced them with their own creatures, who maintained a most perfect watch over every movement of the Emperor so that he was greatly hampered and embarrassed. All appointments and demotions were made by the two rebels. For the sake of popularity, they especially summoned the veteran general Zhu Jun to court, made him Court Administrator, and associated him with the government.

One day came a report that the Governor of Xiliang, Ma Teng, and the Imperial Protector of Bingzhou, Han Sui, with one hundred thousand troops, were rapidly approaching the capital with the intention of attacking the rebels in the name of the Emperor.

Now these leaders from the west had laid careful plans. Ma Teng and Han Sui had sent trusty friends to the capital to find out who would support them. They had conspired with three officials—Court Counselors Ma Yu and Chong Shao, and Imperial Commander Liu Fan—to be their inside allies and plot against the rebels. These three obtained from the Throne two secret edicts conferring the ranks of Commander Who Conquers the West on Ma Teng and Commander Who Guards the West on Han Sui. With these powers, the two commanders joined forces and began their march.

The four leaders of the party in power—Li Jue, Guo Si, Fan Chou, and Zhang Ji—held a consultation with their generals as to how to meet the attack.

Adviser Jia Xu said, “Since the attackers are coming from a distance, our plan is to fortify and wait till shortage of food works for us. In a

hundred days, their supplies will be consumed, and they must retire. We can pursue, and we shall capture them.”

Li Meng and Wang Fang rose and said, “This plan is bad. Give us ten thousand troops, and we will put an end to both of them and offer their heads before your ensign!”

“To fight forthwith means defeat,” said Jia Xu.

Li Meng and Wang Fang cried with one voice, “If we fail, we are willing to lose our heads! But if we win, then your head is forfeit.”

Jia Xu then suggested to Li Jue and Guo Si, saying, “Seventy miles west of the capital stand the Zhouzhi Hills. The passes are narrow and difficult. Send Generals Zhang Ji and Fan Chou to occupy this point of vantage and fortify themselves so that they may support Li Meng and Wang Fang.”

Li Jue and Guo Si accepted this advice. They told off fifteen thousand cavalymen and infantrymen, and Li Meng and Wang Fang left in high spirit. They made a camp ninety miles from Changan.

The force from the west arrived. Ma Teng and Han Sui led out their troops to the attack. They found their opponents Li Meng and Wang Fang in battle array.

Ma Teng and Han Sui rode to the front side-by-side. Pointing to the rebel leaders, the commanders abused them, crying, “Those are traitors! Who will capture them?”

Hardly were the words spoken when there came out a youth general with a clear, white complexion as jade, eyes like shooting stars, lithe of body and strong of limb. He was armed with a long spear and bestrode an

excellent steed. This young leader was Ma Chao, son of Ma Teng, then seventeen years of age.

Though young, he was of supreme valiance. Wang Fang, despising him on account of his youth, galloped forth to fight him. Before they had exchanged many passes, Wang Fang was disabled and fell to a thrust of Ma Chao's spear. The victor turned to retire into the formation, but Li Meng rode after Ma Chao to avenge his fallen colleague.

Ma Chao did not see Li Meng, but his father called out: "You are followed!"

Hardly had Ma Teng spoken when he saw that the pursuer was a prisoner seated on his son's steed. Now Ma Chao had known he was followed, but pretended not to see, waiting till his enemy should have come close and lifted his spear to strike. Then, Ma Chao suddenly wheeled about. The spear thrust met only empty air, and as the horses passed, Ma Chao's powerful arm shot out and pulled Li Meng from the saddle.

Thus, Li Meng and Wang Fang's soldiers were left leaderless and fled in all directions. The army of Ma Teng and Han Sui dashed in pursuit, and a complete victory was scored. They pressed into one of the passes and made a camp. Then, they decapitated Li Meng and exposed his head.

When Li Jue and Guo Si heard that both of the boastful generals had fallen under the hand of one young leader, they knew that Jia Xu had given good advice and was gifted with clear prescience. So they valued his plans more highly and decided to act on the defensive. They refused all challenges to combat.

Surely enough, after a couple of months, the supplies of the Xiliang force were all exhausted and the leaders began to consider retreat.

Just at this juncture a household servant of Ma Yu's family betrayed his master and told of the conspiracy of the three court officials to assist the attackers. The two chiefs Li Jue and Guo Si in revenge seized the three conspirators—Ma Yu, Chong Shao, and Liu Fan—with every member of their households, and beheaded them in the marketplace. The heads of the three were exposed at the front gate of the capital.

Being short of food and hearing of the destruction of their three adherents in the city, the only course for Ma Teng and Han Sui was to retreat. At once, Zhang Ji went in pursuit of Ma Teng, and Fan Chou followed Han Sui. The retreating army under Ma Teng was beaten, and only by Ma Chao's desperate efforts were the pursuers driven off.

Fan Chou pursued the other army. When he had come close, Han Sui rode boldly up and addressed him, saying, "You and I, Sir, are fellow villagers. Why, then, behave so unfriendly?"

Fan Chou replied, "I must obey the commands of my chief."

"I am here for the service of the state. Why do you press me so hard?" said Han Sui.

At this Fan Chou turned his horse, called in his troops, and left Han Sui in peace. Unwittingly, a nephew of Li Jue had been a witness of this scene; and when he saw the enemy allowed to go free, he returned and told his uncle. Angry that his enemy had escaped, Li Jue would have sent an army to wreak vengeance on his general.

But his adviser Jia Xu again came in, saying, "The people are yet unsettled; it is dangerous to provoke another war. Instead, invite Fan Chou

to a banquet and, while the feast is in progress, execute him for dereliction of duty.”

This seemed good to Li Jue, so the banquet was prepared. Zhang Ji and Fan Chou accepted their invitations and went cheerfully.

Toward the latter part of the entertainment, a sudden change came over their host Li Jue, and he suddenly asked Fan Chou, “Why have you been intriguing with Han Sui? You are turning traitor, eh?”

The unhappy guest was taken aback. Before he could frame his words to reply, he saw the assassins rush out with swords and axes. In a moment, all was over, and Fan Chou’s head lay beneath the table.

Scared beyond measure, his fellow-guest Zhang Ji groveled on the floor.

“Fan Chou was a traitor,” said the host, raising Zhang Ji by the arm, “and he has his deserts. You are my friend and need not fear.”

Li Jue gave Zhang Ji command of Fan Chou’s army, with which Zhang Ji returned to his garrison headquarters in Hongnong.

No one of the leaders among the leaguers dared attempt an attack on the party newly risen from Dong Zhuo’s disaffection, while on the other hand, Jia Xu never ceased to urge his masters to exert themselves for the welfare of the people and thus to tempt wise people to join them. And by these means the government began to prosper, and the court to reassert its authority.

However, a new trouble arose in the shape of a resurgence of Yellow Scarves in Qingzhou. They came under numerous chieftains in the number of hundreds of thousand and plundered any place they reached.

Court Administrator Zhu Jun said he knew of one who could destroy this sedition, and when asked who was the man he proposed, Zhu Jun said, “You want to destroy this horde of rebels: you will fail unless you get the service of Cao Cao.”

“And where is he?” asked Li Jue.

“He is Governor of Dongjun. He has a large army, and you have only to order him to act. The rising will be broken.”

A messenger went posthaste with a command for Cao Cao and Bao Xin, Lord of Jibei, to act together in quelling the rebellion. As soon as Cao Cao received the court command, he arranged with his colleagues first to attack the rebels at Shouyang. Bao Xin made a dash right into their midst and inflicted damage wherever he could, but he was killed on the battlefield.

Cao Cao pursued the rebels as they fled to Jibei. Ten thousand surrendered. Then, Cao Cao put his former enemies in his van. When his army reached any place, many more surrendered and joined him. After one hundred days, he had won over three hundred thousand troops and more than one million ordinary folks.

Of these new adherents the strongest and boldest were made the Qingzhou Army, and the others were sent home to their fields. In consequence of these successes, Cao Cao’s prestige and fame became very great and increased daily. He reported his success to Capital Changan and was rewarded with the title of General Who Guards the East.

Liu Dai then submitted; he and his officials sent to Dongjun and invited Cao Cao to take over Yanzhou.

At his new headquarters, Cao Cao welcomed wise counselors and bold warriors, and many gathered around him. Two clever persons, uncle and

nephew, came at the same time, both from Yingchuan, named Xun Yu and Xun You. The uncle had once been in the service of Yuan Shao.

Cao Cao rejoiced when he had won the elder Xun to his side, saying, "Xun Yu is my Zhang Liang!"

He made Xun Yu a Field Commander. The nephew Xun You was famed for his ability and had been in the court service when it was in Luoyang, but he had abandoned that career in the Inner Bureau and retired to his village. Cao Cao made him a Military Instructor.

Xun Yu said to Cao Cao, "There is a certain wise person of Yanzhou somewhere, but I do not know in whose service he is."

"Who is he?"

"Cheng Yu. He belongs to the eastern part of Yanzhou."

"Yes, I have heard of him," said Cao Cao.

So a messenger was sent to his native place to inquire. Cheng Yu was away in the hills engaged in study. Cao Cao sent the messenger to the hills, and Cheng Yu came at the invitation.

"I shall prove unworthy of your recommendation," said Cheng Yu to his friend Xun Yu, "for I am rough and ignorant. But have you forgotten a fellow villager of yours, Guo Jia? He is truly able. Why not spread the net to catch him?"

"I had nearly forgotten!" said Xun Yu suddenly. So he told Cao Cao of this man, who was at once invited.

Guo Jia, discussing the world at large with Cao Cao, recommended Liu Ye from Henan, who was a descendant of Liu Xiu the Latter Founder of Han. When Liu Ye had arrived, he was the means of inviting two more: Man Chong from Shanyang and Lu Qian from Wucheng, who were already known to Cao Cao by reputation. These two brought to their new master's

notice the name of Mao Jie from Chenliu, who also came and was given office. Then a famous leader, with his troop of some hundreds, arrived to offer service: Yu Jin of Taishan, an expert horseman and archer, and skilled beyond his fellows in every form of military exercise. He was made an Army Inspector.

Then, another day, Xiahou Dun brought a fellow to present to Cao Cao.

“Who is he?” asked Cao Cao.

“He is from Chenliu and is named Dian Wei. He is the boldest of the bold, the strongest of the strong. He was one of Zhang Miao’s people, but quarreled with his tent companions and killed some dozens of them with his fists. Then, he fled to the mountains, where I found him. I was out shooting and saw him follow a tiger across a stream. I persuaded him to join my troop, and I recommend him.”

“I see he is no ordinary man,” said Cao Cao. “He is fine and straight and looks very powerful and bold.”

“He is! He killed a man once to avenge a friend and carried his head through the whole marketplace. Hundreds saw him but dared not come near. The weapon he uses now is a couple of spears, each weighs a hundred and twenty pounds, and he vaults into the saddle with these under his arm.”

Cao Cao bade the man give proof of his skill. So Dian Wei galloped to and fro, carrying the spears. Then, he saw away among the tents a huge banner swaying dangerously with the force of the wind and on the point of falling. A crowd of soldiers were vainly struggling to keep it steady. Down he leaped, shouted to the men to clear out and held the staff quite steady with one hand, keeping it perfectly upright in spite of the strong wind.

“This is old E Lai again!” said Cao Cao.

He gave Dian Wei a post of Commander of the Headquarters Guards and besides made Dian Wei presents of an embroidered robe he was wearing and a swift steed with a handsome saddle.

Cao Cao encouraged able people to assist him, and he had advisers on the civil side and valiant generals in the army. He became famous throughout the East of the Passes.

Now Cao Cao's father, Cao Song, was living at Langye, whither he had gone as a hiding place, free from the turmoil of the partisan struggles. Cao Cao wished to be united with him. As a dutiful son, Cao Cao sent the Governor of Taishan, Ying Shao, to escort his father to Yanzhou. Old Cao Song read the letter with joy, and the family prepared to move. They were some forty in all, with a train of a hundred servants and many carts.

Their road led through Xuzhou Region, where the Imperial Protector, Tao Qian, was a sincere and upright man who had long wished to get on good terms with Cao Cao but, hitherto, had found no means of effecting a bond of union. Hearing that Cao Cao's family was passing through his region, Tao Qian went to welcome them, treating them with great cordiality, feasting and entertaining them for two days, and when they left, he escorted them to his boundary. Further, he sent with them General Zhang Kai with a special escort of five hundred.

The whole party reached the county of Huafei. It was the end of summer, just turning into autumn, and at this place, they were stopped by a tremendous storm of rain. The only shelter was an old temple, and thither they went. The family occupied the main rooms and the escort the two side wings. The men of the escort were drenched, angry, and discontented.

Then, Zhang Kai called some of his petty officers to a secret spot and said, "We are old Yellow Scarves and only submitted to Tao Qian because there was no other choice. We have never got much out of it. Now, here is the Cao family with no end of gear, and we can be rich very easily. We will make a sudden onslaught tonight at the third watch and slay the whole lot. Then, we shall have plenty of treasure, and we will get away to the mountains."

They all agreed. The storm continued into the night; and as Cao Song sat waiting anxiously for signs of clearing, he suddenly heard a hubbub at the west end of the temple. His brother, Cao De, drawing his sword, went out to see what it was about, and Cao De was at once cut down. Cao Song seized one of the concubines by the hand, rushed with her through the passage toward the back of the temple so that they might escape. But the lady was stout and could not get through the narrow doors, so the two hid in one of the small outhouses at the side. However, they were seen and slain.

The unhappy Governor Ying Shao fled for his life to Yuan Shao. The murderers fled into the South of River Huai with their plunder after having set fire to the old temple.



Cao Cao, whom the ages praise,
Slew his hosts on his former flight;
Nemesis never turns aside,
Murdered too his family died.



Some of the escort escaped and took the evil tidings to Cao Cao. When he heard, he fell to the earth with a great cry. They raised him.

With set teeth, he muttered, "Tao Qian's people have slain my father; no longer can the same sky cover us! I will sweep Xuzhou off the face of the Earth. Only thus can I satisfy my vengeance."

Cao Cao left one small army of thirty thousand under Xun Yu and Cheng Yu to guard the east headquarters and the three counties of Juancheng, Fanxia, and Dongjun. Then, he set forth with all the remainder to destroy Xuzhou and avenge his father. Xiahou Dun, Yu Jin, and Dian Wei were Van Leaders with Cao Cao's orders to slaughter all the inhabitants of each captured city.

Now the Governor of Jiujiang, Bian Rang, was a close friend of Tao Qian. Hearing Xuzhou was threatened, Bian Rang set out with five thousand troops to his friend's aid. Angered by this move, Cao Cao sent Xiahou Dun to stop and kill Bian Rang while still on the march.

At this time, Chen Gong was in office in Dongjun, and he was also on friendly terms with Tao Qian. Hearing of Cao Cao's design to destroy the whole population, Chen Gong came in haste to see his former companion. Cao Cao, knowing Chen Gong's errand, put him off at first and would not see him. But then Cao Cao could not forget the kindness he had formerly received from Chen Gong, and presently the visitor was called to his tent.

Chen Gong said, "They say you go to avenge your father's death on Xuzhou, to destroy its people. I have come to say a word. Imperial Protector Tao Qian is humane and a good man. He is not looking out for his own advantage, careless of the means and of others. Your worthy father met his unhappy death at the hands of Zhang Kai. Tao Qian is guiltless. Still more innocent are the people, and to slay them would be an evil. I pray you think over it."

Cao Cao retorted angrily, “You once abandoned me, and now you have the impudence to come to see me! Tao Qian slew my whole family, and I will tear his heart out in revenge. I swear it! You may speak for your friend and say what you will. I shall be as if I heard not.”

Intercession had failed. Chen Gong sighed and took his leave. He said, “Alas! I cannot go to Tao Qian and look upon his face.” So Chen Gong rode off to the county of Chenliu to give service to Governor Zhang Miao.

Cao Cao’s army of revenge laid waste to whatever place it passed through, slaying the people and desecrating their cemeteries (AD 193).

When Tao Qian heard the terrible tidings, he looked up to heaven, saying, “I must be guilty of some fault before Heaven to have brought this evil upon my people!”

He called together his officials to consult.

One of them, Cao Bao, said, “Now the enemy is upon us: we cannot sit and await death with folded hands. I, for one, will help you to make a fight.”

Tao Qian reluctantly sent the army out. From a distance, he saw as Cao Cao’s army spread abroad like frost and rushed far and wide like snow. In their midst was a large, white flag, and on both sides was written “Vengeance.”

When he had ranged his troops, Cao Cao rode out, dressed in mourning white, and abused Tao Qian.

But Tao Qian advanced, and from beneath his ensign, he bowed low and said, “I wished to make friends with you, Illustrious Sir, and so I sent Zhang Kai to escort your family. I knew not that his rebel heart was still unchanged. The fault does not lie at my door, as you must see.”

“You old wretch! You killed my father, and now you dare mumble this nonsense!” said Cao Cao. And he asked who would go out and seize Tao Qian.

Xiahou Dun undertook this service and rode out. Tao Qian fled to the inner portion of his array; as Xiahou Dun came on, Cao Bao went to meet him. But just as the two horses met, a hurricane burst over the spot, and the flying dust and pebbles threw both sides into the utmost confusion. Both drew off.

Tao Qian retired into the city and called his officers to council. “The force against us is too strong,” said he. “I will give myself up as a prisoner and let him wreak his vengeance on me. I may save the people.”

But a voice was heard saying, “You have long ruled here, and the people love you. Strong as the enemy is, they are not necessarily able to break down our walls, especially when defended by you and your people. I have a scheme to suggest that I think will make Cao Cao die in a place where he will not find burial.”

These bold words startled the assembly, and they eagerly asked what the scheme was.

Making overtures for friendship, Tao Qian
encountered deadly hate.

But, where danger seemed most threatening, he
discovered safety's gate.

The next chapter will disclose who the speaker was.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act III

CHAPTER 11

LIU BEI RESCUES KONG RONG AT BEIHAI; LU BU DEFEATS CAO CAO
NEAR PUYANG.

It was one Mi Zhu who said he knew how to defeat Cao Cao utterly. Mi Zhu came from a wealthy family of merchants in Donghai that traded in Luoyang. One day, traveling homeward from that city in a carriage, he met an exquisitely beautiful lady trudging along the road who asked him to let her ride. He stopped and yielded his place to her. She invited him to share the seat with her. He mounted, but sat rigidly upright, never even glancing in her direction. They traveled thus for some miles before she thanked him and alighted.

Just as she left, she said, “I am the Goddess of Fire from the Southern Land. I am on my way to execute a decree of the Supreme God to burn your dwelling, but your extreme courtesy has so deeply touched me that I now warn you. Hasten homeward, remove your valuables, for I must arrive tonight.”

Thereupon, she disappeared. Mi Zhu hastily finished his journey and, as soon as he arrived, moved everything out of his house. Sure enough, that night, a fire started in the kitchen and enveloped the whole house. After this, he devoted his wealth to relieving the poor and comforting the afflicted. Tao Qian gave him the magistracy office he then held.

The plan Mi Zhu proposed was this: “I will go to Beihai and beg Governor Kong Rong to help. Another should go to Qingzhou on a similar

mission to get the help from Imperial Protector Tian Kai. If the armies of these two places march on Cao Cao, he will certainly retire.”

Tao Qian accepted the plan and wrote two letters. He asked for a volunteer to go to Qingzhou, and a certain Chen Deng of Guangling offered himself and, after he had left, Mi Zhu was formally entrusted with the mission to the north. Meanwhile, Tao Qian and his generals would hold the city as they could.

Kong Rong was a native of Qufu in the old state of Lu. He was one of the twentieth generation in descent from the Great Teacher, Confucius (Kong Fuzi). Kong Rong had been noted as a very intelligent lad, though somewhat precocious. When ten years old, he had gone to see Li Ying, the Governor of Henan, but the doorkeeper demurred to letting him in.

But when Kong Rong said, “I am Minister Li Ying’s intimate friend,” he was admitted.

Li Ying asked Kong Rong what relations had existed between their families that might justify the term intimate.

The boy replied, “My ancestor of old Confucius questioned your ancestor, the Daoist sage Laozi, concerning ceremonies. So our families have known each other for many generations.”

Li Ying was astonished at the boy’s ready wit.

Presently, High Minister Chen Wei visited, to whom Li Ying told the story of his youthful guest. “He is a wonder, this boy,” said Li Ying, pointing to Kong Rong.

Chen Wei replied, “It does not follow that a clever boy grows up into a clever man.”

The lad took him up at once, saying, "By what you say, Sir, you were certainly one of the clever boys."

The Minister and the Governor both laughed, saying, "The boy is going to be a noble vessel."

Thus, from boyhood Kong Rong was famous. As a man, he rose to be an Imperial Commander and was sent as Governor to Beihai, where he was renowned for his hospitality. He used to quote the lines:

"Let the rooms be full of friends,
And the cups be full of wine.
That is what I like."

After six years at Beihai, the people were devoted to him. The day that Mi Zhu arrived, Kong Rong was, as usual, seated among his guests, and the messenger was ushered in without delay. In reply to a question about the reason of the visit, Mi Zhu presented Tao Qian's letter, which said that Cao Cao was pressing on Xuzhou City and the Imperial Protector prayed for help.

Then said Kong Rong, "Your master and I are good friends, and your presence here constrains me to go to his aid. However, I have no quarrel with Cao Cao, either, so I will first write to him to try to make peace. If he refuses my offer, then I must set my army in motion."

"Cao Cao will not listen to proposals of peace; he is too certain of his strength," said Mi Zhu.

Kong Rong wrote his letter and also gave orders to muster his troops. Just at this moment happened another rising of the Yellow Scarves, ten thousand of

them, and the ruffians began to rob and murder at Beihai. It was necessary to deal with them first, and Kong Rong led his army outside the city.

The rebel leader, Guan Hai, rode out to the front, saying, "I know this county is fruitful and can well spare ten thousand carts of grain. Give me that and we will retire. Refuse, and we will batter down the city walls and destroy every soul!"

Kong Rong shouted back, "I am a servant of the great Hans, entrusted with the safety of their land. Think you I will feed rebels?"

Guan Hai whipped his steed, whirled his sword around his head, and rode forward. Zong Bao, one of Kong Rong's generals, set his spear and rode out to give battle, but after a very few bouts, Zong Bao was cut down. Soon, the soldiers fell into panic and rushed pell-mell into the city for protection. The rebels then laid siege to the city on all sides.

Kong Rong was very down-hearted, and Mi Zhu, who now saw no hope for the success of his mission, was grieved beyond words. The sight from the city wall was exceeding sad, for the rebels were there in enormous numbers.

One day, standing on the wall, Kong Rong saw afar a man armed with a spear riding hard in among the Yellow Scarves and scattering them before him like chaff before the wind.

Before long the man had reached the foot of the wall and called out, "Open the gate!"

But the defenders would not open to an unknown man, and in the delay, a crowd of rebels gathered round the rider along the edge of the moat. Suddenly wheeling about, the warrior dashed in among them and bowled over a dozen at which the others fell back. At this, Kong Rong ordered the wardens to open the gates and let the stranger enter. As soon as he was

inside, he dismounted, laid aside his spear, ascended the wall, and made humble obeisance to the Governor.

“My name is Taishi Ci, and I am from the county of Laihuang. I only returned home yesterday from the north to see my mother, and then I heard that your city was in danger from a rebel attack. My mother said you had been very kind to her and told me I should try to help. So I set out all alone, and here I am.”

This was comforting. Kong Rong already knew Taishi Ci by reputation as a valiant fighting man, although they two had never met. The son being far away from his home, Kong Rong had taken his mother, who dwelt a few miles from the city, under his especial protection and saw to it that she did not suffer from want. This had won the old lady’s heart, and she had sent her son to show her gratitude.

Kong Rong showed his appreciation by treating his guest with the greatest respect, making him presents of clothing and armor, saddles and horses.

Presently, said Taishi Ci, “Give me a thousand soldiers, and I will go out and drive off these fellows.”

“You are a bold warrior, but they are very numerous. It is a serious matter to go out among them,” said Kong Rong.

“My mother sent me because of your goodness to her. How shall I be able to look her in the face if I do not raise the siege? I would prefer to conquer or perish.”

“I have heard Liu Bei is one of the heroes in the world. If we could get his help, there would be no doubt of the result. But there is no one to send.”

“I will go as soon as I have received your letter!”

So Kong Rong wrote letters and gave them to his helper.

Taishi Ci put on his armor, mounted his steed, attached his bow and quiver to his girdle, took his spear in his hand, tied his packed haversack firmly to his saddle bow, and rode out at the city gate. He went quite alone.

Along the moat, a large party of the besiegers were gathered, and they came to intercept the solitary rider. But Taishi Ci dashed in among them, cut down several, and so finally fought his way through.

Guan Hai, hearing that a rider had left the city, guessed what his errand would be and followed Taishi Ci with a party of horsemen. Guan Hai spread them out so that the messenger-rider was entirely surrounded. Then, Taishi Ci laid aside his spear, took his bow, adjusted his arrows one by one, and shot all round him. And, as a rider fell from his steed with every twang of Taishi Ci's bowstring, the pursuers dared not close in.

Thus, he got clear away and rode in hot haste to Liu Bei. Taishi Ci reached Pingyuan, and after greeting his host in proper form, he told how Kong Rong was surrounded and had sent him for help. Then, he presented the letter, which Liu Bei read.

"And who are you?" asked Liu Bei.

"I am Taishi Ci, a fellow from Laihuang. I am not related by ties of kin to Kong Rong, nor even by ties of neighborhood, but I am by the bonds of sentiment and I share his sorrows and misfortunes. The Yellow Scarves have invested his city, and he is distressed with none to turn to; destruction is very near. You are known as humane, righteous, and eager to help the distressed. Therefore, at his command, I have braved all dangers and fought my way through his enemies to pray you save him."

Liu Bei smiled and sighed, saying, "And does he know there is a Liu Bei in this world?"

So Liu Bei, together with Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, told off three thousand troops, and set out to help raise the siege. When the rebel leader, Guan Hai, saw these new forces arriving, he led out his army to fight them, thinking he could easily dispose of so small a force.

The Brothers—and Taishi Ci with them—sat on their horses in the forefront of their array. Guan Hai hastened forward. Taishi Ci was ready to fight, but Guan Yu had opened the combat. He rode forth and the two steeds met. The soldiers set up a great noise. After a few bouts, Guan Yu's Green-Dragon Saber rose and fell, and with the stroke fell the rebel leader.

This was the signal for Zhang Fei and Taishi Ci to take their share, and they advanced side-by-side. With their spears ready, they dashed in, and Liu Bei urged forward his force. The besieged Governor saw his doughty rescuers laying low the rebels as tigers among a flock of sheep: none could withstand them. He then sent out his own troops to join in the battle so that the rebels were between two armies. The rebels' force was completely broken, and many troops surrendered, while the remainder scattered in all directions.

The victors were welcomed into the city, and as soon as possible, a banquet was prepared in their honor. Mi Zhu was presented to Liu Bei. Mi Zhu related the story of the murder of Cao Song by Zhang Kai, Cao Cao's vengeful attack on Xuzhou, and his coming to beg for assistance.

Liu Bei said, "Imperial Protector Tao Qian is a kindly man of high character, and it is a pity that he should suffer this wrong for no fault of his own."

"You are a scion of the imperial family," said Governor Kong Rong, "and this Cao Cao is injuring the people, a strong man abusing his strength. Why not go with me to rescue the sufferers?"

“I dare not refuse, but my force is weak and I must act cautiously,” said Liu Bei.

“Though my desire to help arises from an old friendship, it is a righteous act as well. I do not think your heart is not inclined toward the right,” said Kong Rong.

Liu Bei said, “This being so, you go first and give me time to see Gongsun Zan, from whom I may borrow more troops and horses. I will come anon.”

“You surely will not break your promise?” said the Governor.

“What manner of man think you that I am?” said Liu Bei. “The Sage said, ‘Death is common to all; the person without truth cannot maintain the self.’ Whether I get the troops or not, certainly I shall come myself.”

So the plan was agreed to. Mi Zhu set out to return forthwith, while Kong Rong prepared for his expedition.

Taishi Ci took his leave, saying, “My mother bade me come to your aid, and now happily you are safe. Letters have come from my fellow townsman, Liu Yao, Imperial Protector of Yangzhou, calling me thither, and I must go. I will see you again.”

Kong Rong pressed rewards upon Taishi Ci, but he would accept nothing and departed.

When his mother saw him, she was pleased at his success, saying, “I rejoice that you have been able to prove your gratitude!”

After this, he departed for Yangzhou.

Liu Bei went away to his friend Gongsun Zan and laid before Gongsun Zan his design to help Xuzhou.

“Cao Cao and you are not enemies. Why do you spend yourself for the sake of another?” said Gongsun Zan.

“I have promised,” Liu Bei replied, “and dare not break faith.”

“I will lend you two thousand horse and foot,” said Gongsun Zan.

“Also, I wish to have the services of Zhao Yun,” said Liu Bei.

Gongsun Zan agreed to this also. They marched away, Liu Bei’s own troops being in the front, and Zhao Yun, with the borrowed troops, being in the rear.

In due course, Mi Zhu returned saying that Kong Rong had also obtained the services of Liu Bei. The other messenger, Chen Deng, came back and reported that Tian Kai would also bring help. Then was Tao Qian’s heart set at ease.

But both the leaders, though they had promised aid, greatly dreaded their antagonist and camped among the hills at a great distance, fearful of coming too close to Cao Cao’s quarters. Cao Cao knew of their coming and divided his army into parts to meet them, so postponing the attack on the city itself.

Presently, Liu Bei came up and went to see Kong Rong, who said, “The enemy is very powerful, and Cao Cao handles his army skillfully. We must be cautious. Let us make most careful observations before we strike a blow.”

“What I fear is famine in the city,” said Liu Bei. “They cannot hold out very long. I will put my troops with yours under your command, while I, with Zhang Fei, make a dash through to see Tao Qian and consult with him.”

Kong Rong approved of this, so he and Tian Kai took up positions in the ox-horn formation, with Guan Yu and Zhao Yun on either side to support them.

When Liu Bei and Zhang Fei, leading one thousand troops, made their dash to get through Cao Cao’s army, they got as far as the flank of his camp when there arose a great beating of drums, and cavalry and infantry rolled out like billows on the ocean. The leader was Yu Jin.

Yu Jin checked his steed and called out, “You mad men from somewhere, where are you going?”

Zhang Fei heard Yu Jin but deigned no reply. He only rode straight to attack the speaker. After they had fought a few bouts, Liu Bei waved his double swords as signal for his troops to come on, and they drove Yu Jin before them. Zhang Fei led the pursuit, and in this way, they reached the city wall.

From the city wall, the besieged saw a huge banner embroidered in white “Liu Bei of Pingyuan,” and the Imperial Protector bade them open the gate for the rescuers to enter. Liu Bei was made very welcome and conducted to the residency, and a banquet was prepared in his honor. The soldiers also were feasted.

Tao Qian was delighted with Liu Bei, admiring his high-spirited appearance and clear speech. Tao Qian bade Mi Zhu offer Liu Bei the seal and insignia of the protectorship office. But Liu Bei shrank back, startled.

“What does this mean?” said Liu Bei.

Tao Qian said, "There is trouble on every side, and the kingly rule is no longer maintained. You, Sir, are a member of the family and eminently fitted to support them and their prerogatives. I am verging on senility, and I wish to retire in your favor. I pray you not to decline, and I will report my action to the court."

Liu Bei started up from his seat and bowed before his host, saying, "Scion of the family I may be, but my merit is small and my virtue meager. I doubt my fitness even for my present post, and only a feeling of doing right sent me to your assistance. To hear such speech makes me doubt. Surely, you think I came with greed in my heart. May God help me no more if I cherished such a thought!"

"It is a poor old man's real sentiment," said Tao Qian.

Time after time, Tao Qian renewed his offer to entrust the region of Xuzhou to Liu Bei, but Liu Bei kept refusing.

In the midst of this came Mi Zhu, saying, "The enemies had reached the wall, and something must be done to drive them off. The present matter could await a more tranquil time."

Said Liu Bei, "I ought to write to Cao Cao to press him to raise the siege. If he refuses, we will attack forthwith."

Orders were sent to the camps outside to remain quiescent till the letter could reach Cao Cao.

It happened that Cao Cao was holding a council when a messenger with a war letter was announced. The letter was brought in and handed to him and, when he had opened and looked at it, he found it was from Liu Bei.

This is the letter, very nearly:

“Since meeting you outside the pass, fate has assigned us to different quarters of the world, and I have not been able to pay my respects to you. Touching the death of your noble father, it was owing to the vicious nature of Zhang Kai and due to no fault of Tao Qian. Now, while the remnant of the Yellow Scarves is disturbing the lands and Dong Zhuo’s partisans have the upper hand in the capital, I wish that you, Illustrious Sir, would regard the critical position of the court rather than your personal grievances, and so divert your forces from the attack on Xuzhou to the rescue of the state. Such would be for the happiness of this city and the whole empire.”

Cao Cao gave vent to a torrent of abuse: “Who is this Liu Bei that he dares write and exhort me? Beside, he means to be satirical.”

Cao Cao issued orders to put the bearer of the letter to death and to press on the siege.

But Guo Jia remonstrated, saying, “Liu Bei has come from afar to help Tao Qian, and he is trying the effect of politeness before resorting to arms. I pray you, my lord, reply with fair words that his heart may be lulled with a feeling of safety. Then attack with vigor, and the city will fall.”

Cao Cao found this advice good, so he spared the messenger, telling him to wait to carry back his reply.

While this was going on, a horseman came with news of misfortune: “Lu Bu has invaded Yanzhou, now holding Puyang. The three counties left—Juancheng, Fanxia, and Dongjun—are under severe attack!”

When Li Jue and Guo Si, the two partisans of Dong Zhuo, succeeded in their attack on the capital, Lu Bu had fled to Yuan Shu. However, Yuan Shu looked askance at him for his instability and refused to receive him.

Then, Lu Bu went to try Yuan Shao, who was a brother of Yuan Shu. Yuan Shao accepted the warrior and made use of him in an attack upon Zhang Yan in Changshan. But Lu Bu's success filled him with pride, and his arrogant demeanor so annoyed the other commanders that Yuan Shao was on the point of putting him to death. To escape this, Lu Bu had gone away to Zhang Yang, Governor of Shangdang, who accepted his services.

About this time, Pang Shu, who had been hiding and protecting Lu Bu's family in Changan since his disappearance, restored them to him. This deed angered Li Jue and Guo Si so that they put Pang Shu to death and wrote to Lu Bu's protector to serve him the same. To escape this, Lu Bu once again had to flee and this time joined himself to Zhang Miao, the Governor of Chenliu.

Lu Bu arrived just as Zhang Miao's brother, Zhang Chao, was introducing Chen Gong.

Chen Gong said to Zhang Miao, "The rupture of the empire has begun, and warlords are seizing what they can. It is strange that you, with all the advantages of population and provisions you enjoy, do not strike for independence. Cao Cao has gone on an expedition against the east, leaving his own territory defenseless. Lu Bu is one of the warriors of the day. If you and he together attacked and got Yanzhou, you could then proceed to the dominion."

Zhang Miao was pleased and resolved to try. He ordered an attack, and soon Lu Bu was in possession of Yanzhou and its neighborhoods, all but the three small counties of Juancheng, Fanxia, and Dongjun, which were vigorously and desperately defended by Xun Yu and Cheng Yu in concert.

Cao Cao's cousin, Cao Ren, fought many battles but was repeatedly defeated, and a messenger with the evil tidings had come from him, asking prompt help.

Cao Cao was greatly disturbed by this and said, "If my own region be lost, I have no home to return to! I must do something at once."

"The best thing would be to become friends with Liu Bei at any cost and return to Yanzhou," said Guo Jia.

So Cao Cao wrote to Liu Bei, gave the letter to the waiting messenger, and broke camp. The news that the enemy had left was very gratifying to Tao Qian, who then invited his various defenders into Xuzhou City and prepared banquets and feasts in token of his gratitude.

At one of these, when the feasting was over, he proceeded with his wish of retirement in favor of Liu Bei.

Placing Liu Bei in the seat of highest honor, Tao Qian bowed before him and then addressed the assembly, "I am old and feeble, and my two sons lack the ability to hold so important an office as this. The noble Liu Bei is a descendant of the imperial house. He is of lofty virtue and great talent. Let him, then, take over the rule of this region, and only too willingly I shall retire to have leisure to nurse my health."

Liu Bei replied, "I came at the request of Governor Kong Rong because it was the right thing to do. Xuzhou is saved, but if I take it, surely the world will say I am a wicked man."

Mi Zhu said, "You may not refuse. The House of Han is falling, their realm is crumbling, and now is the time for doughty deeds and signal services. This is a fertile region, well-populated and rich, and you are the man to rule over it."

"But I cannot accept," said Liu Bei.

“Imperial Protector Tao Qian is a great sufferer,” said Chen Deng, “and cannot see to matters. You may not decline, Sir.”

Said Liu Bei, “Yuan Shu belongs to a family of rulers, who have held the highest offices of state four times in three generations. A multitude of people respects him. Why not invite him to this task?”

“Because Yuan Shu is a drying skeleton in a dark tomb: not worth talking about. This opportunity is a gift from Heaven, and you will never cease to regret its loss.” So spoke Kong Rong, but still Liu Bei obstinately refused.

Tao Qian besought him with tears, saying, “I shall die if you leave me, and there will be none to close my eyes.”

“Brother, you should accept the offer thus made,” said Guan Yu.

“Why so much fuss?” said Zhang Fei. “We have not taken the place. It is he who wishes to give it to you.”

“You all persuade me to do what is wrong,” said Liu Bei.

Seeing he could not persuade Liu Bei, Tao Qian then said, “As you are set in determination, perhaps you will consent to encamp at Xiaopei. It is only a little town, but thence you can keep watch and ward over the region.”

They all with one voice prayed Liu Bei to consent, so he gave in.

The feast of victory being now ended, the time came to say farewell. When Zhao Yun took his leave, Liu Bei held his hands alternately while dashing away the falling tears. Kong Rong and Tian Kai went home to their own places.

When Liu Bei and his Brothers took up their abode in Xiaopei, they first repaired the defenses and then they put out proclamations in order to calm the inhabitants.

In the meantime, Cao Cao had marched toward his own region (AD 194).

Cao Ren met and told him, “Lu Bu is very powerful, and he has Chen Gong as Adviser. Yanzhou is as good as lost, with the exception of the three counties which Xun Yu and Cheng Yu are vigorously defending together.”

Cao Cao said, “I own that Lu Bu is a bold fighter but nothing more, for he has no craft. So we need not fear him seriously.” Then, he gave orders to make a strong camp till they could think out some victorious plan.

Lu Bu, knowing of Cao Cao’s return, called two of his subordinate generals, Xue Lan and Li Fang, to him and assigned to them the task of holding the city of Yanzhou, saying, “I have long waited for opportunity to employ your skill. Now I give you ten thousand soldiers, and you are to hold the city while I go forth to attack Cao Cao.”

They accepted.

But Chen Gong, the strategist, came in hastily, saying, “General, you are going away. Whither?”

“I am going to camp my troops at Puyang, to establish an ox-horn vantage.”

“You are making a mistake,” said Chen Gong. “The two you have chosen to defend this city are unequal to the task. For this expedition, remember that about sixty miles due south, on the treacherous road to the Taishan Mountains, is a very advantageous position where you should place your best men in ambush. Cao Cao will hasten homeward by double marches when he hears what has happened. If you strike when half his troops have gone past this point, you may seize him.”

Said Lu Bu, “I am going to occupy Puyang and see what develops. How can you guess my big plan?” So Lu Bu left Xue Lan in command at

Yanzhou and went away.

Now, when Cao Cao approached the dangerous part of the road near the Taishan Mountains, Guo Jia warned him, saying, “Do not advance hastily, my lord. There is doubtless an ambush.”

But Cao Cao laughed, saying, “We know all Lu Bu’s dispositions. Xue Lan is keeping the city, while Lu Bu is massing his troops at Puyang. Do you think Lu Bu has laid an ambush? I shall tell Cao Ren to besiege Yanzhou, and I shall go to Puyang.”

In Puyang, when Chen Gong heard of the enemy’s approach, he spoke, saying, “The enemy will be fatigued with long marches, so attack quickly before they have time to recover.”

Lu Bu replied, “I, a single horseman, am afraid of none. I come and go as I will. Think you I fear this Cao Cao? Let him settle his camp; I will take him after that.”

Now, Cao Cao neared Puyang, and he made a camp. The next day, he led out his commanders, and they arrayed their armies in the open country. Cao Cao took up his station on horseback between the two standards, watching while his opponents arrived and formed up in a circular area.

Lu Bu was in front, followed by eight of his generals, all strong men: Zhang Liao of Mayi, backed by Hao Meng, Cao Xing, and Cheng Lian; and Zang Ba of Huaying, backed by Wei Xu, Song Xian, and Hou Cheng. They led an army of fifty thousand in total.

The drums began their thunderous roll, and Cao Cao, pointing to his opponent, said, “You and I had no quarrel; why, then, did you invade my land?”

“The cities of Han are the possession of all. What is your special claim?” said Lu Bu.

So saying, Lu Bu ordered Zang Ba to ride forth and challenge. From Cao Cao's side, the challenge was accepted by Yue Jin. The two steeds approached each other; two spears were lifted both together, and they exchanged near thirty blows with no advantage to either. Then, Xiahou Dun rode out to help his colleague, and in reply, out went Zhang Liao from Lu Bu's side. And they four fought.

Then, fierce anger seized upon Lu Bu. Setting his Trident Halberd, he urged his Red Hare forward to where the fight was waging. Seeing him approach, Xiahou Dun and Yue Jin both fled, but Lu Bu pressed on after them, and Cao Cao's army lost the day. Retiring ten miles, they made a new camp. Lu Bu called in and mustered his troops.

The day having gone against him, Cao Cao called a council, and Yu Jin said, "From the hilltops, today I saw a camp of our enemies on the west of Puyang. There were but few men therein, and tonight after today's victory, it will not be defended. Let us attack; if we can take the camp, we shall strike fear into the heart of Lu Bu. This is our best plan."

Cao Cao thought so, too. He and six of his generals—Cao Hong, Li Dian, Mao Jie, Lu Qian, Yu Jin, and Dian Wei—and twenty thousand horse- and footmen left that night by a secret road for the camp.

In his camp, Lu Bu was rejoicing for that day's victory, when Chen Gong reminded him, saying, "The western camp is a point of importance, and it might be attacked."

But Lu Bu replied, "The enemy will not dare approach after today's defeat."

"Cao Cao is a very able commander," replied Chen Gong. "You must keep a good lookout for him, lest he attack our weak spot."

So arrangements were made for defense. Generals Gao Shun, Wei Xu, and Hou Cheng were ordered to march there.

At dusk, Cao Cao reached the camp and began an immediate attack on all four sides. The defenders could not hold him off. They ran in all directions, and the camp was captured.

Near the fourth watch, when the defending party came, Cao Cao sallied forth to meet them and met Gao Shun. Another battle then began and waged till dawn. About that time, a rolling of drums was heard in the west, and they told Cao Cao that Lu Bu himself was at hand. Thereupon, Cao Cao abandoned the attack and fled.

Gao Shun, Wei Xu, and Hou Cheng pursued him, while Lu Bu blocked his escape route. Cao Cao's two generals, Yu Jin and Yue Jin, attacked Lu Bu's troops but could not break them. Cao Cao went away north. But from behind some hills came out Zhang Liao and Zang Ba to attack. Lu Qian and Cao Hong were sent to stop the attackers, but Lu Qian and Cao Hong were both defeated. Cao Cao sought safety in the west. Here again, his retreat was met by Lu Bu's four generals, Hao Meng, Cao Xing, Cheng Lian, and Song Xian.

The fight became desperate. Cao Cao dashed at the enemy's array. The din was terrible. Arrows fell like pelting rain upon them, and they could make no headway.

Cao Cao was desperate and cried out in fear, "Who can save me?"

Then, from the crush dashed out Dian Wei with his double spears, crying, "Fear not, my lord!" Dian Wei leapt from his steed, put aside his double spears, and laid hold of a handful of battleaxes. Turning to his followers, he said, "When the ruffians are at ten paces, call out to me."

Then, he set off with mighty strides, plunging forward, careless of the flying arrows. Lu Bu's horsemen followed, and when they got near, Dian Wei's followers shouted, "Ten paces!"

"Five, then call!" shouted back Dian Wei, and went on.

Presently, "Five paces!"

Then Dian Wei spun round and flung the battleaxes. With every fling, a man fell from the saddle, and never a battleax missed.

Having thus slain ten or so, the remainder fled, and Dian Wei quickly remounted his steed, set his twin spears, and rushed again into the fight with a vigor that none could withstand. One by one, his opponents yielded, and he was able to lead Cao Cao safely out of the press of battle. Cao Cao and his commanders went to their camp.

But as evening fell, the noise of pursuit fell on their ears, and soon appeared Lu Bu himself.

"Cao Cao, you rebel, do not flee!" shouted Lu Bu as he approached with his halberd ready for a thrust.

All stopped and looked in each others' faces: the soldiers were weary, their steeds spent. Fear smote them, and they looked around for some place of refuge.

You may lead your lord safely out of the press,
But what if the enemy follow?

We cannot say here what Cao Cao's fate was, but the next chapter will relate.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act III

CHAPTER 12

TAO QIAN THRICE OFFERS XUZHOU TO LIU BEI; CAO CAO RETAKES
YANZHOU FROM LU BU.

The last chapter closed with Cao Cao in great danger. However, help came. Xiahou Dun, with a body of soldiers, found his chief, checked the pursuit, and fought with Lu Bu till dusk. Rain fell in torrents swamping everything, and as the daylight waned, they drew off, and Cao Cao reached camp. He rewarded Dian Wei generously and advanced him in rank.

When Lu Bu reached his camp, he called in his adviser Chen Gong. Then, Chen Gong proposed a new stratagem.

He said, "In Puyang, there is a rich, leading family, Tian by name, who number thousands, enough to populate a whole county by themselves. Order one of these people to go to Cao Cao's camp with a pretended secret letter about your ferocity, and the hatred of the people, and their desire to be rid of you. And spread the news that only Gao Shun is left to guard the city, and they would help anyone who would come to save them. Thus, our enemy Cao Cao will be inveigled into the city, and we will destroy him either by fire or ambush. His skill may be equal to encompassing the universe, but he will not escape."

Lu Bu thought this trick might be tried, and they arranged for the Tian family letter to be sent.

Coming soon after the defeat, when Cao Cao felt uncertain what step to take next, the secret letter was read with joy:

“Lu Bu has marched to Liyang. The city’s defense is weak; you must attack immediately, and we will render interior help. Follow the sign of a white flag with the word ‘Rectitude’ written thereon.”

“Heaven is going to give me Puyang!” said Cao Cao joyfully. So he rewarded the messenger very liberally and began to prepare for the expedition.

Then came Liu Ye, saying, “Lu Bu is no strategist, but Chen Gong is full of guile. I fear treachery in this letter, and you must be careful. If you go, then enter with only one-third of your army, leaving the others outside the city as a reserve.”

Cao Cao agreed to take this precaution. He went to Puyang, which he found gay with fluttering flags. Looking carefully, he saw among them, at the west gate, the white flag with the looked-for inscription. His heart rejoiced.

That day, just about noon, the city gates opened, and two bodies of soldiers appeared as if to fight. Gao Shun was the Front Commander, and Hou Cheng the Rear Commander. Cao Cao told off his general, Dian Wei, to oppose them. Neither body, however, came on to full engagement but fell back into the city. By this move, Dian Wei and his troops had been drawn close up to the drawbridge.

From within the city, several soldiers were seen taking any chance of confusion to escape and come outside. To Cao Cao they said, “We are clients of the Tian family,” and they gave him secret letters stating:

“The signal will be given about the first-watch setting by beating a gong. That will be the time to attack. The gates will be opened.”

So Cao Cao ordered Xiahou Dun to march to the left and Cao Hong to the right. Cao Cao led the main army—together with Xiahou Yuan, Li Dian, and Yue Jin—into the city.

Li Dian pressed upon his master precaution, saying, “My lord should stay outside the city. Let us go in first.”

But Cao Cao bade him be silent, saying, “If I do not go, who will advance?”

And so, at the sound of the first gong, Cao Cao led the way. The moon had not yet arisen. As he drew near the west gate, they heard a crackling sound, then a loud shouting, and then torches moved hither and thither. Next, the gates were thrown wide open, and Cao Cao, whipping up his steed, galloped in.

But when he reached the state residence, he noticed the streets were quite deserted, and then he knew he had been tricked. Wheeling round his horse, he shouted to his followers to retire. This was the signal for another move. An explosion of a signal bomb was heard close at hand, and it was echoed from every side in a deafening roar. Gongs and drums beat all around with a roar like rivers rushing backward to their source and the ocean boiling up from its depths. From two sides—east and west—came bodies of soldiers eager to attack, led by Lu Bu’s generals Zhang Liao and Zang Ba.

Cao Cao dashed off toward the north, only to find his way barred by Hao Meng and Cao Xing. Cao Cao tried for the south gate, but met enemies led by Gao Shun and Hou Cheng. Cao Cao’s trusty commander Dian Wei,

with fierce eyes and gritted teeth, at last burst through and got out, with the enemy close after him.

But when Dian Wei reached the drawbridge, he glanced behind him and missed his master. Immediately, Dian Wei turned back and cut an alley inside. Just within, he met Li Dian.

“Where is our lord?” cried Dian Wei.

“I am looking for him!” said Li Dian.

“Quick! Get help from outside,” shouted Dian Wei. “I will seek him!”

So Li Dian hastened for aid, and Dian Wei slashed his way in, looking on every side for Cao Cao. He was not to be found. Dashing out of the city, Dian Wei ran into Yue Jin, who asked where their lord was.

“I have entered the city twice in search of him but cannot find him!” said Dian Wei.

“Let us go in together,” said Yue Jin.

They rode up to the gate. But the noise of bombs and the pouring fire from the gate tower frightened Yue Jin’s horse so that it refused to pass. Wherefore, Dian Wei alone went in, butting through the smoke and dashing through the flames. But he got through and searched on every side.

When Cao Cao saw his sturdy protector Dian Wei cut his way out and disappear, leaving him surrounded, he again made an attempt to reach the north gate. On the way, sharply silhouetted against the glow, he saw the figure of Lu Bu coming toward him with his Trident Halberd ready to kill. Cao Cao covered his face with his hand, whipped up his steed and galloped past.

But Lu Bu came galloping up behind him and, tapping him on the helmet with the halberd, cried, "Where is Cao Cao?"

Cao Cao turned and, pointing to a dun horse well ahead, cried, "There: on that dun! That is he!"

Hearing this, Lu Bu left pursuing Cao Cao to gallop after the rider of the dun.

Thus relieved, Cao Cao set off for the east gate. Then he fell in with Dian Wei, who took him under his protection and fought through the press, leaving a trail of death behind till they reached the gate. Here, the fire was raging fiercely, and burning beams were falling on all sides. The Earth element seemed to have interchanged with the Fire element.

Dian Wei warded off the burning pieces of wood with his lance and rode into the smoke, making a way for his lord. Just as they were passing through the gate, a flaming beam fell from the gate tower. Cao Cao barely warded it off with his arm, but it struck his steed on the quarters and knocked the steed down. Cao Cao's hand and arm were badly burned and his hair and beard singed. Dian Wei turned back to his rescue.

Luckily, Xiahou Yuan came along just then, and the two raised Cao Cao and set him on Xiahou Yuan's horse. And thus they got him out of the burning city. But they had to go through heavy fighting till daybreak.

Cao Cao returned to his camp. His officers crowded about his tent, anxious for news of his health. He soon recovered and laughed when he thought of his escape.

"I blundered into that fool's trap, but I will have my revenge," said he.

"Let us have a new plan soon," said Guo Jia.

“I will turn his trick to my own use. I will spread the false report that I was burned in the fire, and that I died at the fifth watch. He will come to attack as soon as the news gets abroad, and I will have an ambush ready for him in the Maling Hills. I will get him this time.”

“Really a fine stratagem!” said Guo Jia.

So the soldiers were put into mourning, and the report went everywhere that Cao Cao was dead. And soon, Lu Bu heard it, and he assembled his army at once to make a surprise attack, taking the road by the Maling Hills to his enemy’s camp.

As he was passing the hills, he heard the drums beating for an advance, and the ambushing soldiers leapt out all round him. Only by desperate fighting did he get out of the melee and, with a sadly-diminished force, returned to his camp at Puyang. There, he strengthened the fortifications and could not be tempted forth to battle.

This year, locusts suddenly appeared, and they consumed every green blade. There was a famine, and in the northeast, grain rose to fifty strings of copper coins a cart. People even took to cannibalism. Cao Cao’s army suffered from want, and he marched them to Juancheng. Lu Bu took his troops to Shanyang. Perforce therefore, the fighting ceased.

In Xuzhou, Imperial Protector Tao Qian, over sixty years of age, suddenly fell seriously ill, and he summoned his confidant, Mi Zhu, to his chamber to make arrangements for the future.

As to the situation, the adviser said, “Cao Cao abandoned his attack on this place because of his enemy’s seizure of Yanzhou, and now they are

both keeping the peace solely because of the famine. But Cao Cao will surely renew the attack in the spring.

“When Liu Bei refused to allow you to vacate office in his favor, you were in full vigor. Now, you are ill and weak, and you can make this a reason for retirement. He will not refuse again.”

So a message was sent to the little garrison town of Xiaopei calling Liu Bei to a counsel on military affairs. This brought him with his Brothers and a slender escort. He was at once called into the sick man’s chamber. Quickly disposing of the inquiries about his health, Tao Qian soon came to the real object of his call for Liu Bei.

“Sir, I asked you to come for the sole reason that I am dangerously ill and likely to die at any time. I look to you, Illustrious Sir, to consider the Hans and their empire as more important than anything else, and so to take over the symbols of office of this region, the commission and the seal, that I may close my eyes in peace.”

“You have two sons; why not depute them to relieve you?” said Liu Bei.

“Both lack the requisite talents. I trust you will instruct them after I have gone, but do not let them have the guidance of affairs.”

“But I am unequal to so great a charge.”

“I will recommend to you one who could assist you. He is Sun Qian from Beihai who could be appointed to some post.” Turning to Mi Zhu, Tao Qian said, “The noble Liu Bei here is the most prominent man of the time, and you should serve him well.”

Still would Liu Bei have put from himself such a post, but just then the Imperial Protector, pointing to his heart to indicate his sincerity, passed away.

When the ceremonial wailing of the officials was over, the insignias of office were brought to Liu Bei. But he would have none of them. The following days, the inhabitants of the town and surrounding country crowded into the state residence, bowing and with tears, calling upon Liu Bei to receive the charge.

“If you do not, we cannot live in peace!” said they.

To these requests, his Brothers added their persuasion, till at length he consented to assume the administrative duties. He forthwith appointed Sun Qian and Mi Zhu as his Advisers, and Chen Deng his Secretary. He moved his army from Xiaopei to Xuzhou City, and he put forth proclamations to reassure the people.

He also attended to the burial ceremonies; he and all his army dressing in mourning. After the fullest sacrifices and ceremonies, a burial place for the late Imperial Protector was found close to the source of the Yellow River. The dead man’s testament was forwarded to court.

The news of the events in Xuzhou duly reached the ears of Cao Cao, now in Juancheng.

Said he, angrily, “I have missed my revenge. This Liu Bei has simply stepped into command of the region without expending half an arrow: he sat still and attained his desire. But I will put him to death and then dig up Tao Qian’s corpse in revenge for the death of my noble father!”

Orders were issued for the army to prepare for a new campaign against Xuzhou.

But Adviser Xun Yu remonstrated with Cao Cao, saying, “The Supreme Ancestor secured the Land Within the Passes and his illustrious

successor on the throne, Liu Xiu, took Henei. They both first consolidated their position, whereby they could command the entire empire. Their whole progress was from success to success. Hence they accomplished their great designs in spite of difficulties.

“Illustrious Sir, your Land Within the Passes and your Henei are Yanzhou and the Yellow River, which you had first and which is one of the utmost strategic points in the empire. If you undertake this expedition against Xuzhou leaving many troops here for defense, you will not accomplish your design; if you leave too few, Lu Bu will fall upon us. And finally, if you lose this and fail to gain Xuzhou, whither will you retire? That region is not vacant. Although Tao Qian has gone, Liu Bei holds it, and since the people support him, they will fight to the death for him. To abandon this place for that is to exchange the great for the small, to barter the trunk for the branches, to leave safety and run into danger. I would implore you to reflect well.”

Cao Cao replied, “It is not a good plan to keep soldiers idle here during such scarcity.”

“If that is so, it would be more advantageous to attack the eastern counties of Chencheng, Yingchuan, and Runan, and feed your army on their supplies. The remnants of the Yellow Scarves, He Yi and Huang Shao, are there with stores and treasures of all kinds that they have amassed by plundering wherever they could. Rebels of their stamp are easily broken. Break them, and you can feed your army with their grain. Moreover, both the court and the common people will join in blessing you.”

This new design appealed strongly to Cao Cao, and he quickly began his preparations to carry it out. He left Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren to guard Juancheng, while his main body, under his own command, marched to seize Chencheng. This done, they went to Runan and Yingchuan.

Now when the Yellow Scarves leaders, He Yi and Huang Shao, knew that Cao Cao was approaching. They came out in a great body to oppose him. They met at Goat Hill. Though the rebels were numerous, they were a poor lot, a mere pack of beasts without organization and lacking discipline. Cao Cao ordered his strong archers and vigorous crossbowmen to keep them in check.

Dian Wei was sent out to challenge. The rebel leaders chose a second-in-command champion for their side, who rode out and was vanquished in the third bout. Then, Cao Cao's army pushed forward, and they made a camp at Goat Hill.

The following day, the rebel Huang Shao himself led forth his army and made his battle array along a circle. A leader advanced on foot to offer combat. He wore a yellow turban on his head and a green robe. His weapon was an iron mace.

He shouted, "I am He Man, the devil who shoots across the sky. Who dare fight with me?"

Cao Hong uttered a great shout and jumped from the saddle to accept the challenge. Sword in hand, he advanced on foot, and the two engaged in fierce combat in the face of both armies. They exchanged some fifty blows, neither gaining the advantage. Then, Cao Hong feigned defeat and ran away. He Man went after him. Just as he closed, Cao Hong tried a feint and then suddenly wheeling about, wounded his adversary. Another slash, and He Man lay dead.

At once, Li Dian dashed forward into the midst of the Yellow Scarves and laid hands on the rebel chief Huang Shao, whom he carried off as captive. Cao Cao's troops then set on and scattered the rebels. The spoil of treasure and food was immense.

The other rebel leader, He Yi, fled with a few hundred horsemen toward Gepei Hills. But while on their road thither, there suddenly appeared a force led by a certain swashbuckler. This bravo was a well-built man, thickset and stout, with a waist ten spans in girth. He used a long sword.

He barred the way of retreat. He Yi set his spear and rode toward him. But at the first encounter, the bravo caught He Yi under his arm and bore He Yi off as prisoner. All the rebels were terror-stricken, dropped from their horses, and allowed themselves to be bound. Then, the victor drove them like cattle into an enclosure with high banks.

Presently, Dian Wei, still pursuing the rebels, reached Gepei Hills. The swashbuckler went out to meet him.

“Are you also a Yellow Scarves rebel?” said Dian Wei.

“I have some hundreds of them prisoners in an enclosure here.”

“Why not bring them out?” said Dian Wei.

“I will if you win this sword from my hand.”

This annoyed Dian Wei, who attacked him. They engaged, and the combat lasted for two long hours and then was still undecided. Both rested a while. The swashbuckler was the first to recover and renewed the challenge. They fought till dusk, and then, as their horses were quite spent, the combat was once more suspended.

In the meantime, some of Dian Wei’s men had run off to tell the story of this wondrous fight to Cao Cao, who hastened in amazement, followed by many officers, to watch it and see the result.

Next day, the unknown warrior rode out again, and Cao Cao saw him. In Cao Cao’s heart, he rejoiced to see such a doughty hero and desired to gain his services. So Cao Cao bade Dian Wei feign defeat.

Dian Wei rode out in answer to the challenge, and some thirty bouts were fought. Then, Dian Wei turned and fled toward his own side. The bravo followed and came quite close. But a flight of arrows drove him away.

Cao Cao hastily drew off his men for one-and-a-half miles and then secretly sent a certain number to dig a pitfall and sent troops armed with hooks to lie in ambush.

The following day, Dian Wei was sent out with one hundred horsemen. His adversary, nothing loath, came to meet Dian Wei.

“Why does the defeated leader venture forth again?” cried he, laughing.

The swashbuckler spurred forward to join battle, but Dian Wei, after a faint show of fighting, turned his horse and rode away. His adversary, intent upon capture, took no care, and he and his horse both blundered into the pitfall. The hookmen took him captive, bound him, and carried him before Cao Cao.

As soon as he saw the prisoner, Cao Cao advanced from his tent, sent away the soldiers, and with his own hands loosened the leader’s bonds. Then, he brought out clothing and dressed him, bade him be seated and asked who he was and whence he came.

“I am named Xu Chu. I am from Qiao. When the rebellion broke out, my relatives and I, numbered some hundreds, built a stronghold within a rampart for protection. One day, the robbers came, but I had stones ready for them. I told my relatives to keep on bringing them up to me, and I threw them, hitting somebody every time I threw. This drove off the robbers. Another day, they came, and we were short of grain. So I agreed with them to an exchange of plow-oxen for grain. They delivered the grain and were driving away the oxen when the beasts took fright and tore off to their pens.

I seized two of the oxen by the tail, one with each hand, and hauled them backwards a hundred or so paces. The robbers were so amazed that they thought no more about oxen but went on their way. So they never troubled us again.”

“I have heard of your mighty exploits,” said Cao Cao. “Will you join my army?”

“That is my strongest desire,” said Xu Chu.

So Xu Chu called up his clan, some hundreds in all, and they formally submitted to Cao Cao. Xu Chu received the rank of General and got ample rewards. The two rebel leaders, He Yi and Huang Shao, were executed. Runan and Yingchuan were now perfectly pacified.

Cao Cao withdrew his army and went back to Juancheng.

Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren came out to welcome him, and they told him, “Scouts report that Yanzhou City has been left defenseless. Lu Bu’s generals, Xue Lan and Li Fang, have given up all its garrison to plundering the surrounding country. We must act without loss of time. With our soldiers fresh from victory, the city will fall at a tap of the drum.”

So Cao Cao marched the army straight to the city. An attack was quite unexpected, but the two leaders, Xue Lan and Li Fang, hurried out their few soldiers to fight.

Xu Chu, the latest recruit, said, “I wish to capture these two and make them an introductory gift!”

The task was given to him, and he rode forth. Li Fang, with his halberd, advanced to meet Xu Chu. The combat was brief, as Li Fang fell in the second bout. His colleague, Xue Lan, retired with his troops. But he found the drawbridge had been seized by Li Dian, so that he could not get shelter within the city. Xue Lan led his men toward Juye, but Lu Qian

pursued and killed him with an arrow. His soldiers scattered in four directions. And thus, Yanzhou was recaptured.

Next, Cheng Yu proposed an expedition to take Puyang. Cao Cao marched his army out in perfect order. The Van Leaders were Dian Wei and Xu Chu; Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan led the left wing, Li Dian and Yue Jin led the right wing, and Yu Jin and Lu Qian guarded the rear. Cao Cao himself commanded the center.

When they approached Puyang, Lu Bu wished to go out in person and alone to attack, but his adviser Chen Gong protested, saying, “General, you should not go out until the arrival of the other officers.”

“Whom do I fear?” said Lu Bu.

So he threw caution to the winds and went out of the city. He met his foes and began to revile them. The redoubtable Xu Chu went to fight with him, but after twenty bouts neither combatant was any the worse.

“He is not the sort that one man can overcome,” said Cao Cao.

And he sent Dian Wei to attack Lu Bu from another direction. Lu Bu withstood the double onslaught. Soon after, the flank commanders joined in—Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan attacking the left, Li Dian and Yue Jin surrounding the right. Lu Bu had six opponents. These proved really too many for him, so he turned his horse and rode back to the city.

But when the members of the Tian family saw him coming back beaten, they raised the drawbridge.

Lu Bu shouted, “Open the gates! Let me in!”

But the Tians said, “We have gone over to Cao Cao!”

This was hard to hear, and the beaten man abused them roundly before he left. Chen Gong got away through the east gate, taking with him the general's family.

Thus, Puyang came into Cao Cao's hands, and for their present services, the Tian family were pardoned for their previous fault.

However, Liu Ye said, "Lu Bu is a savage beast. If let alive, he will be a great danger. Hunt him down!"

Liu Ye was ordered to keep Puyang. Wherefore, Cao Cao determined to follow Lu Bu to Dingtao, whither he had gone for refuge.

Lu Bu, Zhang Miao, and Zhang Chao were assembled in the city. Gao Shun and other generals were out foraging. Cao Cao's army arrived but did not attack for many days, and presently, he withdrew fifteen miles and made a stockade. It was the time of harvest, and he set his soldiers to cut the wheat for food.

The spies reported this to Lu Bu, who came over to see. But when he saw that Cao Cao's stockade lay near a thick wood, he feared an ambush and retired. Cao Cao heard that Lu Bu had come and gone and guessed the reason.

"He fears an ambush in the wood," said Cao Cao. "We will set up flags there and deceive him. There is a long embankment near the camp, but behind it there is no water. There we will lay an ambush to fall upon Lu Bu when he comes to burn the wood."

So Cao Cao hid all his soldiers behind the embankment except half a hundred drummers, and he got together many peasants to loiter within the stockade as though it were not empty.

Lu Bu rode back and told Chen Gong what he had seen.

“This Cao Cao is very crafty and full of wiles,” said the adviser. “Do not act.”

“I will use fire this time and burn out his ambush,” said Lu Bu.

Next morning, Lu Bu rode out, and there he saw flags flying everywhere in the wood. He ordered his troops forward to set fire on all sides. But to his surprise, no one rushed out to make for the stockade. Still, he heard the beating of drums and doubt filled his mind. Suddenly, he saw a party of soldiers move out from the shelter of the stockade. He galloped over to see what it meant.

Then the signal-bombs exploded: out rushed the troops, and all their leaders dashed forward. Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Xu Chu, Dian Wei, Li Dian, and Yue Jin all attacked at once. Lu Bu was at a loss and fled into the open country. One of his generals, Cheng Lian, was killed by an arrow of Yue Jin. Two-thirds of his troops were lost, and the beaten remainder went to tell Chen Gong what had come to pass.

“We had better leave,” said Chen Gong. “An empty city cannot be held.”

So Chen Gong and Gao Shun, taking their chief’s family with them, abandoned Dingtao. When Cao Cao’s soldiers got into the city, they met with no resistance. Zhang Chao committed suicide by burning himself. Zhang Miao fled to Yuan Shu.

Thus, the whole northeast fell under the power of Cao Cao. He immediately tranquilized the people and rebuilt the cities and their defenses (AD 195).

Lu Bu, in his retreat, fell in with his generals, and Chen Gong also rejoined him, so that he was by no means broken.

“I have but a small army,” said Lu Bu, “but still enough to break Cao Cao!”

And so he retook the backward road.

Indeed:

Thus does fortune alternate, victory and defeat,
The happy conqueror today, tomorrow must retreat?

What was the fate of Lu Bu will appear later.



END OF ACT III

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT IV:

ROYALTY, SIN, AND THE HIGH ROAD:
THE MANY CRIMES OF LI JUE & GUO SI
.
THE TREACHERY OF YUAN SHU

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IV

CHAPTER 13

LI JUE AND GUO SI DUEL IN CHANGAN; THE EMPEROR ESTABLISHES ANYI AS THE NEW CAPITAL.

The last chapter told of the defeat of Lu Bu, and his gathering the remnant of his army at Dingtao. When all his generals had joined him, he began to feel strong enough to try conclusions with Cao Cao once again.

Said Chen Gong, who was opposed to this course, "Cao Cao is too strong right now. Seek some place where we can rest for a time before trying."

"Suppose I went to Yuan Shao," said Lu Bu.

"Send first to make inquiries."

Lu Bu agreed.

The news of the fighting between Cao Cao and Lu Bu had reached Jizhou, and one of Yuan Shao's advisers, Shen Pei, warned him, saying, "Lu Bu is a savage beast. If he gets possession of Yanzhou, he will certainly attempt to add this region to it. For your own safety you should help to crush him."

Wherefore, Yuan Shao sent Yan Liang with fifty thousand troops to destroy Lu Bu. The spies heard this and at once told Lu Bu, who was greatly disturbed and called in Chen Gong.

"Go over to Liu Bei, who has lately succeeded to Xuzhou," said Chen Gong. Hence, Lu Bu went thither.

Hearing of Lu Bu's approach, Liu Bei said, "Lu Bu is a hero, and we will receive him with honor."

But Mi Zhu was strongly against receiving him, saying, "He was a cruel, bloodthirsty beast!"

But Liu Bei replied, "How would misfortune have been averted from Xuzhou, if he had not attacked Yanzhou? He cannot have bad intention, now that he comes seeking an asylum."

"Brother, your heart is really too good. Although it may be as you say, it would be well to prepare," said Zhang Fei.

Liu Bei, with a great following, met Lu Bu ten miles outside the city gates, and the two chiefs rode in side by side. They proceeded to the residence, and there, after the elaborate ceremonies of reception were over, they sat down to converse.

Said Lu Bu, "After Minister of the Interior Wang Yun and I plotted to slay Dong Zhuo and my misfortune in Li Jue and Guo Si's sedition, I drifted about from one place to another, and none of the nobles east of the Huashan Mountains seemed willing to receive me. When Cao Cao with wicked ambition invaded this region and you, Sir, came to its rescue, I aided you by attacking Yanzhou and thus diverting a portion of his force. I did not think then that I would be the victim of a vile plot and lose my leaders and my soldiers. But now, if you will, I offer myself to you that we may together accomplish great designs."

Liu Bei replied, "When the late Imperial Protector Tao Qian died, there was no one to administer Xuzhou, and so I assumed that task for a time. Now since you are here, General, it is most suitable that I step down in your favor."

Whereupon, Liu Bei took the insignias and the seal of authority and handed them to Lu Bu. Lu Bu was on the point of accepting them, when he saw Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, who stood behind Liu Bei, glaring at him with angry eyes.

So Lu Bu put on a smile and said, "I may be something of a fighting man, but I could not rule a great region like this."

Liu Bei repeated his offer, but Chen Gong said, "The strong guest does not oppress his host. You need not fear, my lord!"

Then, Liu Bei desisted. Banquets were held and dwelling places prepared for the guest and his retinue.

As soon as was convenient, Lu Bu returned the feast. Liu Bei went with his two Brothers. Halfway through the banquet, Lu Bu requested Liu Bei to retire to one of the inner private rooms, whither Guan Yu and Zhang Fei followed him. There, Lu Bu bade his wife and daughter bow as to their benefactor. Here also, Liu Bei showed excessive modesty.

Lu Bu said, "Good younger brother, you need not be so very modest."

Zhang Fei heard what Lu Bu said, and his eyes glared, shouting, "What sort of a man are you that dares call our Brother 'younger brother?' He is one of the ruling family—a jade leaf on a golden branch. Come out, and I will fight you three hundred bouts for the insult!"

Liu Bei hastily checked the impulsive one, and Guan Yu persuaded him to go away. Then, Liu Bei apologized, saying, "My poor Brother talks wildly after he has been drinking. I hope you will not blame him."

Lu Bu nodded but said nothing. Soon after, the guests departed. But as the host escorted Liu Bei to his carriage, he saw Zhang Fei galloping up, armed as for a fray.

“Lu Bu, you and I will fight that duel of three hundred bouts!” shouted Zhang Fei. Liu Bei bade Guan Yu check him.

Next day, Lu Bu came to take leave of his host. “You, O Lord, kindly received me, but I fear your Brothers and I cannot agree. So I will seek some other asylum.”

“General, if you go, the blame is mine. My rude Brother has offended and must eventually apologize. In the meantime, what think you of a temporary sojourn at the town where I was encamped for some time, Xiaopei? The place is small and mean, but it is nearby, and I will see to it that you are supplied with all you need.”

Lu Bu thanked him and accepted this offer. He led his troops there and took up residence. After he had gone, Liu Bei reproved Zhang Fei for what he did, and Zhang Fei did not again refer to the matter.

That Cao Cao had subdued the region around the Shandong Mountains has been stated before. He petitioned the Throne and was rewarded with the titles of General Who Exhibits Firm Virtue and Lord of Feiting.

At this time, Li Jue and Guo Si were commanding the court. Li Jue had made himself Regent Marshal, and his colleague Guo Si had styled himself Grand Commander. Their conduct was abominable, but no one dared to criticize them.

Imperial Guardian Yang Biao and Minister Zhu Jun privately talked with Emperor Xian and said, “Cao Cao has over two hundred thousand troops and many capable advisers and leaders. It would be well for the empire if he would lend his support to the imperial family and help to rid the government of this evil party.”

His Majesty wept, "I am weary of the insults and contempt of these wretches and should be very glad to have them removed."

"I have thought of a plan to estrange Li Jue and Guo Si and so make them destroy each other. Then Cao Cao could come and cleanse the court," said Yang Biao.

"How will you manage it?" asked the Emperor.

"Guo Si's wife, Lady Qiong, is very jealous, and we can take advantage of her weakness to bring about a quarrel." So Yang Biao received instruction to act, with a secret edict to support him.

Yang Biao's wife, Lady Kai, made an excuse to visit Lady Qiong at her palace and, in the course of conversation, said, "There is talk of secret liaison between the General, your husband, and the wife of Minister Li Jue. It is a great secret, but if Minister Li Jue knew it, he might try to harm your husband. I think you ought to have very little to do with that family."

Lady Qiong was surprised but said, "I have wondered why he has been sleeping away from home lately, but I did not think there was anything shameful connected with it. I would never have known if you had not spoken. I must put a stop to it."

By and by, when Lady Kai took her leave, Lady Qiong thanked her warmly for the information she had given.

Some days passed, and Guo Si was going over to the dwelling of Li Jue for a dinner.

Lady Qiong did not wish him to go, and she said, "This Li Jue is very deep, and one cannot fathom his designs. You two are not of equal rank, and if he made away with you, what would become of your poor handmaid?" Guo Si paid no attention, and his wife could not prevail on him to stay at home.

Late in the afternoon, some presents arrived from Li Jue's palace, and Lady Qiong secretly put poison into the delicacies before she set them before her lord. Guo Si was going to taste at once, but she said, "It is unwise to consume things that come from outside. Let us try on a dog first."

They did, and the dog died. This incident made Guo Si doubt the kindly intentions of his colleague.

One day, at the close of business at court, Li Jue invited Guo Si to his palace. After Guo Si arrived home in the evening, rather the worse for too much wine, he was seized with a colic. His wife said she suspected poison and hastily administered an emetic, which relieved the pain.

Guo Si began to feel angry, saying, "We did everything together and helped each other always. Now he wants to injure me! If I do not get in the first blow, I shall suffer some injury."

So Guo Si began to prepare his guards for any sudden emergency.

This was told to Li Jue, and he in turn grew angry, saying, "So Guo Si is doing so and so!"

Then, Li Jue got his guards underway and came to attack Guo Si. Both houses had ten thousand, and the quarrel became so serious that they fought a pitched battle under the city walls. When that was over, both sides turned to plundering the people.

Then, a nephew of Li Jue, Li Xian, suddenly surrounded the Palace, put the Emperor and Empress in two carriages, and assigned Jia Xu and Zuo Ling to carry them off. The Palace attendants were made to follow on foot. As they went out of the rear gate, they met Guo Si's army, which began to shoot at the cavalcade with arrows. They killed many attendants before Li Jue's army forced them to retire.

The carriages got out of the Palace and eventually reached Li Jue's camp, while Guo Si's soldiers plundered the Palace and carried off all the women left there to their camp. Then, the Palace was set on fire.

As soon as Guo Si heard of the whereabouts of the Emperor, he came over to attack the camp of Li Jue. The Emperor, between these two opposing factions, was greatly alarmed.



Slowly the Hans had declined but renewed their vigor
with Liu Xiu,

Twelve were the rulers before him, followed him also
twelve others.

Foolish were two of the latest, dangers surrounded the
altars,

These were degenerate days, with authority given to
eunuchs.

Then did He Jin the simple, the inept, who
commanded the army,

Warriors call to the capital, wishing to drive out the
vermin;

Though they drove out the leopards, tigers and wolves
quickly entered.

All kinds of evil were wrought by a low class creature
from Xizhou.

Wang Yun, honest of heart, beguiled this wretch with a
woman,

Much desired of his henchman, thus sowing seeds of
dissension.

Strife resulted, and peace no longer dwelt in the
empire.

No one suspected that Li Jue and Guo Si would
continue the evil,

Much to the sorrow of the Middle Kingdom; yet they
stove for a trifle.

Famine stalked in the Palace, grief for the clashing of
weapons;

Why did the warlords strive? Why was the land thus
partitioned?

They had turned aside from the way appointed of
Heaven.

Kings must ponder these things; heavy the burden lies
on them,

Chieftest in all the realm theirs is no common
appointment,

Should the King falter or fail, calamities fall on the
multitude people,

The empire is drenched with their blood, grisly ruin
surrounds them.

Steeped in sorrow and sad, read you the ancient
records;

Long is the tale of years; the tale of sorrow is longer.

Wherefore one who would rule, chiefly must exercise
forethought.

This and a keen-edged blade, these must suffice to
maintain one.



Guo Si's army arrived, and Li Jue went out to give battle. Guo Si's troops had no success and retired. Then, Li Jue removed the imperial captives to Meiwo, with his nephew Li Xian as jailer. Supplies were reduced, and famine showed itself on the faces of the eunuchs. The Emperor sent to Li Jue to request five carts of rice and five sets of bullock bones for his attendants.

Li Jue angrily replied, "The court gets food morning and evening. Why do they ask for more?" He sent putrid meat and rotten grain.

The Emperor was very vexed at the new insult, uttering, "How dare the rebels do that to me?"

Court Counselor Yang Qi advised patience, saying, "Li Jue is a base creature, but under the present circumstances, Your Majesty must put up with it. You may not provoke him."

The Emperor bowed and was silent, but the tears fell on his garments.

Suddenly, someone came in with the tidings: "A force of cavalry, their sabers glittering in the sun, are approaching to rescue the Chariot!"

Then, they heard the gongs beat and the roll of the drums. The Emperor sent to find out who it was. But it was Guo Si, and the sadness fell again.

Presently arose a great din. For Li Jue had gone out to do battle with Guo Si, whom he abused by name.

"I treated you well, so why did you try to kill me?" said Li Jue.

"You are a rebel; why should I not slay you?" cried Guo Si.

"You call me rebel, when I am guarding the Emperor?"

"You have abducted him: do you call that guarding?"

“Why so many words? Let us forgo a battle and settle the matter in single combat, the winner to take the Emperor and go.”

The two generals fought in front of their armies, but neither could prevail over the other.

Then they saw Yang Biao come riding up to them, crying, “Rest a while, O Commanders, for I have invited a party of officers to arrange a peace.”

Wherefore, the two leaders retired to their camps. Soon, Yang Biao, Zhu Jun, and sixty other officials came to Guo Si’s camp. They were all thrown into confinement.

“We came with good intentions,” they moaned, “and we are treated like this!”

“Li Jue has run off with the Emperor; I have to have the officers,” said Guo Si.

“What does it mean? One has the Emperor, the other his officers. What do you want?” said Yang Biao.

Guo Si lost patience and drew his sword, but General Yang Mi persuaded him not to slay the speaker. Then, Guo Si released Yang Biao and Zhu Jun but kept the others in the camp.

“Here we are—two officers of the Throne—and we cannot help our lord. We have been born in vain!” said Yang Biao to Zhu Jun.

Throwing their arms about each other, they wept and fell swooning to the earth. Zhu Jun went home, fell seriously ill, and died.

Thereafter the two adversaries fought every day for nearly three months, each losing many soldiers.

Now Li Jue was irreligious and practiced magic. He often called witches to beat drums and summon spirits, even when in camp. Jia Xu used to remonstrate with him, but quite uselessly.

Yang Qi said to the Emperor, "That Jia Xu, although a friend of Li Jue, never seems to have lost the sense of loyalty to Your Majesty."

Soon after, Jia Xu himself arrived.

The Emperor sent away his attendants and said to Jia Xu, weeping the while, "Can you not pity the Hans and help me?"

Jia Xu prostrated himself, saying, "That is my dearest wish. But, Sire, say no more; let thy servant work out a plan."

The Emperor dried his tears, and soon, Li Jue came in. He wore a sword by his side and strode straight up to the Emperor, whose face became the color of clay.

Then, Li Jue spoke, "Guo Si has failed in his duty and imprisoned the court officers. He wished to slay Your Majesty, and you would have been captured but for me."

The Emperor joined his hands together in salute and thanked Li Jue. Li Jue went away.

Before long, Huangfu Li entered. The Emperor, knowing him as a man of persuasive tongue and that he came from the same county as Li Jue, bade him go to both factions to try to arrange peace.

Huangfu Li accepted the mission and first went to Guo Si, who said, "I would release the officers if Li Jue would restore the Emperor to full liberty."

Huangfu Li then went to the other side.

To Li Jue, he said, "Since I am a Xiliang man, the Emperor and the officers have selected me to make peace between you and your adversary. Guo Si has consented to cease the quarrel. Will you agree to peace?"

"I overthrew Lu Bu, have upheld the government for four years, and have many great services to my credit, as all the world knows. That other fellow, that horse-thief, has dared to seize the officers of state and to set himself up against me. I have sworn to slay him. Look around you: do you not think my army large enough to break him?"

"It does not follow," said Huangfu Li. "In ancient days in Youqiong, Hou Yi, proud of and confident in his archer's skill, gave no thought to others and governed alone, and he so perished. Lately, you yourself have seen the powerful Dong Zhuo betrayed by Lu Bu, who had received many benefits at his hands. In no time, Dong Zhuo's head was hanging over the gate. So you see, mere force is not enough to ensure safety.

"Now, you are a general, with the axes and whips and all the symbols of rank and high office; your descendants and all your clan occupy distinguished positions. You must confess that the state has rewarded you liberally. True, Guo Si has seized the officers of state, but you have done the same to the 'Most Revered.' Who is worse than the other?"

Li Jue angrily drew his sword and shouted, "Did the Son of Heaven send you to mock and shame me?"

But his commander, Yang Feng, checked him. "Guo Si is still alive," said Yang Feng, "and to slay the imperial messenger would give him a popular excuse to raise an army against you. And all the nobles would join him."

Jia Xu also persuaded Li Jue, and gradually, his wrath cooled down. Huangfu Li was urged to go away.

But Huangfu Li would not be satisfied with failure. As he went out of the camp, he cried loudly, “Li Jue will not obey the Emperor’s command. He will kill his prince to set up himself!”

Counselor Hu Miao tried to shut Huangfu Li’s mouth, saying, “Do not utter such words. You will only bring hurt upon yourself!”

But Huangfu Li shrieked at him also, saying, “You also are an officer of state, and yet you even back up the rebel. When the prince is put to shame, the minister dies. That is our code. If it be my lot to suffer death at the hands of Li Jue, so be it!”

And Huangfu Li maintained a torrent of abuse. The Emperor heard of the incident, called in Huangfu Li, and sent him away to his own county of Xiliang.

Now more than half of Li Jue’s troops were from Xiliang, and he had also the assistance of the Qiangs, the northern tribespeople beyond the border. When Huangfu Li spread that Li Jue was a rebel and so were those who helped him, and that there would be a day of heavy reckoning, those stories disturbed the soldiers.

Li Jue sent one of his officers, General Wang Chan of the Tiger Army, to arrest Huangfu Li. But Wang Chan had a sense of right and esteemed Huangfu Li as an honorable man. Instead of carrying out the orders, Wang Chan returned to say Huangfu Li could not be found.

Meanwhile, Jia Xu tried to work on the feelings of the tribespeople. He said to them, “The Son of Heaven knows you are loyal to him and have bravely fought and suffered. He has issued a secret command for you to go home, and then he will reward you.”

The tribesmen had a grievance against Li Jue for not paying them, so they listened readily to the insidious persuasions of Jia Xu and deserted.

Then, Jia Xu advised the Emperor, "Li Jue is covetous in nature. He is deserted and enfeebled. A high office should be granted to him to lead him astray."

So the Emperor officially appointed Li Jue Regent Marshal. This delighted him greatly, and he ascribed his promotion to the potency of his wise witches' prayers and incantations. He rewarded those people most liberally.

But his army was forgotten. Wherefore, his commander, Yang Feng, was angry. Yang Feng said to General Song Guo, "We have taken all the risks and exposed ourselves to stones and arrows in his service, yet instead of giving us any reward he ascribes all the credit to those witches of his."

"Let us put him out of the way and rescue the Emperor," said Song Guo.

"You explode a bomb within as signal, and I will attack from outside."

So the two agreed to act together that very night at the second watch. But they had been overheard, and the eavesdropper told Li Jue. Song Guo was seized and put to death. That night, Yang Feng waited outside for the signal, and while waiting, out came Li Jue himself. Then, a melee began, which lasted till the fourth watch. But Yang Feng got away and fled to Xian.

But from this time, Li Jue's army began to fall away, and he felt more than ever the losses caused by Guo Si's frequent attacks. Then came news that Zhang Ji, at the head of a large army, was coming down from Shanxi to make peace between the two factions. Zhang Ji vowed he would attack the

one who was recalcitrant. Li Jue tried to gain favor by hastening to send to tell Zhang Ji he was ready to make peace, as did Guo Si.

So the strife of the rival factions ended at last, and Zhang Ji advised the Emperor to go to Hongnong, near Luoyang.

The Emperor was delighted, saying, "I have longed to go back to the east."

Zhang Ji was rewarded with the title of Commander of the Flying Cavalry and was highly honored. Zhang Ji saw to it that the Emperor and the court had good supply of necessities. Guo Si set free all his captive officers, and Li Jue prepared transport for the court to move to the east. Li Jue told off companies of his Royal Guard to escort the cavalcade.

The progress was without incident as far as Xinfeng. Near Baling Bridge, the west wind of autumn began to blow with great violence, but soon, above the howling of the gale was heard the trampling of a force of several hundred. They stopped at a bridge and barred the way.

"Who comes?" cried a voice.

"The Imperial Chariot is passing, and who dares stop it?" said Court Counselor Yang Qi, riding forward.

Two generals of the barring party advanced to Yang Qi, saying, "General Guo Si has ordered us to guard the bridge and stop all spies. You say the Emperor is here: we must see him, and then we will let you pass."

So the pearl curtain was raised, and the Emperor said, "I, the Emperor, am here. Why do you not retire to let me pass, gentlemen?"

They all shouted, "*Wansui!* Long life! Long life!" and fell away to allow the cortege through.

But when they reported what they had done, Guo Si was very angry, saying, "I meant to outwit Zhang Ji, seize the Emperor, and hold him in

Meiwo. Why have you let him get away?"

He put the two officers to death, set out to pursue the cavalcade, and overtook it just at the county of Huaying.

The noise of a great shouting arose behind the travelers, and a loud voice commanded, "Stop the train!"

The Emperor burst into tears. "Out of the wolf's den into the tiger's mouth!" said he.

No one knew what to do; they were all too frightened. But when the rebel army was just upon them, they heard the beating of drums, and from behind some hills came into the open a cohort of more than one thousand soldiers preceded by a great flag bearing the name "Han General Yang Feng."

Having been defeated by Li Jue, Yang Feng fled to the foothills of Xian, and he went to offer his services as soon as he heard of the Emperor's journey. Seeing it was necessary to fight now, he drew up his line of battle.

Guo Si's general, Cui Yong, rode out and began a volley of abuse.

Yang Feng turned and said, "Where is Xu Huang?"

In response, out came a valiant warrior gripping a heavy battleax. He galloped up on his fleet bay, making directly for Cui Yong, whom he felled at the first blow. At this, the whole force dashed forward and routed Guo Si. The defeated army went back some seven miles.

Yang Feng rode forward to see the Emperor, who graciously said, "It is a great service you have rendered: you have saved my life."

Yang Feng bowed and thanked him, and the Emperor asked to see the actual slayer of the rebel leader. So Xu Huang was led to the chariot, where

he bowed and was presented as Xu Huang of Hedong.

The Emperor recognized the achievement of the warrior.

Then the cavalcade went forward, Yang Feng acting as escort as far as the city of Huaying, the halting place for the night. The commander of the place, Duan Wei, supplied them with clothing and food; the Emperor passed the night in Yang Feng's camp.

Next day, Guo Si, having mustered his troops, appeared in front of the camp, and Xu Huang rode out to engage. But Guo Si threw his army out so that they entirely surrounded the camp, and the Emperor was in the middle.

The situation was very dire, when help appeared in the person of a galloping general from the southeast, and the rebels fell away at his assault. Then, Xu Huang smote them and so scored a victory.

When they had time to see their helper, they found him to be Dong Cheng, the uncle of the Emperor, or the "State Uncle." The Emperor wept as he related his sorrows and dangers.

Said Dong Cheng, "Be of good courage, Sire. General Yang Feng and I have pledged ourselves to kill both the rebels Li Jue and Guo Si and so purify the world."

The Emperor bade them travel east as soon as possible, and so they went on night and day till they reached their destination, Hongnong.

Guo Si led his defeated army back. Meeting Li Jue, he told Li Jue of the rescue of the Emperor and whither they were going.

"If they reach the Huashan Mountains and get settled in the east, they will send out proclamations to the whole country, calling up the nobles to

attack us, and we and our whole clans will be in danger,” said Guo Si.

“Zhang Ji is holding Changan, and we must be careful. There is nothing to prevent a joint attack on Hongnong, during which we can kill the Emperor and divide the empire between us,” said Li Jue.

Guo Si found this a suitable scheme, so their armies came together again in one place and united in plundering the countryside. As they proceeded to Hongnong, they left destruction behind them.

Yang Feng and Dong Cheng heard of the rebels’ approach when they were yet a long way off, so Yang Feng and Dong Cheng turned back and decided to meet them at Dongjian.

Li Jue and Guo Si had already made their plan. Since the loyal troops were few as compared with their own horde, they would overwhelm the loyal troops like a flood. So when the day of battle came, they poured out, covering the hills and filling the plains.

Yang Feng and Dong Cheng devoted themselves solely to the protection of the Emperor and Empress. The officials, the attendants, the archives and records, and all the paraphernalia of the court were left to care for themselves. The rebels ravaged Hongnong, but the two protectors got the Emperor safely away into Shanbei.

When the rebel generals showed signs of pursuit, Yang Feng and Dong Cheng had to play a double-edged sword. They sent to offer to discuss terms of peace with Li Jue and Guo Si; at the same time, they sent a secret edict to enlist help from the leaders of the White Wave rebels—Han Xian, Li Yue, and Hu Cai. The White Wave was a branch of the Yellow Scarves, and Li Yue was actually a brigand and had ravaged throughout the woods and hills. But the need for help was so desperate.

These three, being promised pardon for their faults and crimes and a grant of official rank, naturally responded to the call, and thus the loyal side was strengthened so that Hongnong was recaptured.

But meanwhile, Li Jue and Guo Si laid waste whatever place they reached, slaying the aged and weak, forcing the strong to join their ranks. When going into a fight, they forced these people-soldiers to the front, and they called them the “Dare-to-Die” soldiers.

Li Jue and Guo Si’s force was overwhelming. When Li Yue, the White Wave leader, approached with his army, Guo Si bade his soldiers scatter clothing and valuables along the road. The former robbers could not resist the temptation, so a scramble began. Then, Guo Si’s soldiers fell upon the disordered ranks and did much damage. Yang Feng and Dong Cheng had to take the Emperor away to the north; Li Jue and Guo Si pursued.

Li Yue said, “The danger is grave. I pray Your Majesty mount a horse and go in advance!”

The Emperor replied, “I cannot bear to abandon my officers.”

They wept and struggled on as best they could. The White Wave leader Hu Cai was killed in one attack.

The enemy came very near, and the Emperor left his carriage and went on foot. Yang Feng and Dong Cheng escorted him to the bank of the Yellow River. Li Yue sought a boat to ferry him to the other side. The weather was very cold, and the Emperor and Empress cuddled up close to each other, shivering. They reached the river, but the banks were too high, and they could not get down into the boat.

So Yang Feng proposed, “Fasten together the horses’ bridles and lower down His Majesty slung by the waist.”

However, the Empress' brother, Fu De, said, "I found some ten rolls of plain silk from dead soldiers, and we can use them instead."

And they rolled up the two imperial personages in the silk, and thus they lowered them down near the boat. Then, Li Yue took up his position in the prow, leaning on his sword. Fu De carried the Empress on his back into the boat.

The boat was too small to carry everybody, and those unable to get on board clung to the cable, but Li Yue cut them down, and they fell into the water. They ferried over the Emperor and then sent back the boat for the others. There was a great scramble to get on board, and they had to chop off the fingers and hands of those who persisted in clinging to the boat. The lamentation rose to the heavens.

When they mustered on the far bank, many were missing; only a dozen of the Emperor's suite were left.

Yang Feng found a bullock cart and transported the Emperor and Empress to Dayang. They had no food and at night sought shelter in a poor, tile-roofed house. Some old country folks offered them boiled millet, but it was too coarse to be swallowed.

Next day, the Emperor conferred titles on those who had protected him. Li Yue was made General Who Conquers the North, and Han Xian was appointed General Who Conquers the East.

The flight continued. Soon two officers of rank came up with the cortege, and they bowed before His Majesty with many tears. They were Imperial Guardian Yang Biao and Court Administrator Han Rong. The Emperor and Empress lifted up their voices and wept with them.

Said Han Rong to his colleague, "The rebels have confidence in my words. You stay as guard of the Emperor, and I will take my life in my

hands and try to bring about peace.”

After Han Rong had gone, the Emperor rested for a time in Yang Feng’s camp. But Yang Biao requested the Emperor to head for Anyi and make the capital there. When the train reached the town, they found it containing not a single lofty building, and the court lived in grass huts devoid even of doors. They surrounded these with a fence of thorns as a protection, and within this, the Emperor held counsel with his ministers. The soldiers camped round the fence.

Now, Li Yue and his fellow ruffians showed their true colors. They wielded the powers of the Emperor as they wished, and officials who offended them were beaten or abused, even in the presence of the Emperor. They purposely provided thick wine and coarse food for the Emperor’s consumption. He struggled to swallow what they sent. Li Yue and Han Xian joined in recommending to the Throne the names of convicts, common soldiers, sorcerers, leeches, and such people, who thus obtained official ranks. There were more than two hundred of such people. As seals could not be engraved, pieces of wood were hammered into some sort of a shape. Court affairs had never degraded to such a low point.

Eventually, Han Rong went to see Li Jue and Guo Si. After listening to his vigorous persuasions, the two rebel generals agreed to set free the officials and Palace people.

A famine occurred that same year and people were reduced to eating grass from the roadside. Starving, they wandered hither and thither. But food and clothing were sent to the Emperor from the Governor of Henei, Zhang

Yang, and the Governor of Hedong, Wang Yi, and the court began to enjoy a little repose.

Dong Cheng and Yang Feng sent laborers to restore the palaces in Luoyang with the intention of moving the court thither. Li Yue was opposed to this.

Dong Cheng argued, "Luoyang is the original capital as opposed to the paltry town of Anyi. Removal would be but reasonable."

Li Yue wound up by saying, "You may get the court to remove, but I shall remain here."

But when the consent of the Emperor had been given and a start made by Dong Cheng and Yang Feng, Li Yue secretly sent to arrange with Li Jue and Guo Si to capture the Emperor. However, this plot leaked out, and the escort was so arranged as to prevent such a thing; they pressed on to the pass at Gu Hills as rapidly as possible. Li Yue heard this and, without waiting for his rebel colleagues to join him, set out to act alone.

About the fourth watch, just as the cavalcade was passing Gu Hills, a voice was heard shouting, "Stop those carriages! Li Jue and Guo Si are here!"

This frightened the Emperor greatly, and his terror increased when he saw the whole mountainside suddenly light up.

The rebel party, erstwhile split in twain,
To work their wicked will now join three again.

How the Son of Heaven escaped this peril will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IV

CHAPTER 14

CAO CAO MOVES THE COURT TO XUCHANG; LU BU LEADS A NIGHT
RAID AGAINST XUZHOU.

The last chapter closed with the arrival of Li Yue, who shouted out falsely that the army was that of the two arch-rebels Li Jue and Guo Si come to capture the imperial cavalcade.

But Yang Feng recognized the voice of Li Yue and said, "This is only the cohort of Li Yue!"

He bade Xu Huang go out to fight him. Xu Huang went, and in the first bout, the traitor fell. The White Wave rebels scattered.

The travelers got safely through Gu Pass. Here, the Governor of Henei, Zhang Yang, supplied them plentifully with food and other necessities and escorted the Emperor to Zhidao. For his timely help, the Emperor conferred upon Zhang Yang the rank of Regent General. Yang Feng moved his army to the northeast of Luoyang and camped at Yewang.

Capital Luoyang was presently entered. Within the walls, all was destruction. The palaces and halls had been burned, the streets overgrown with grass and brambles and obstructed by heaps of ruins. The palaces and courts were represented by broken roofs and toppling walls. A small "palace," however, was soon built, and therein the officers of court presented their congratulations, standing in the open air among thorn bushes and brambles. The reign style was changed from Prosperous Stability to Rebuilt Tranquility, the first year (AD 196).

The year was grievous with famine. The Luoyang people, even reduced in numbers as they were to a few hundred families, had not enough to eat, and they prowled about, stripping the bark off trees and grubbing up the roots of plants to satisfy their starving hunger. Officers of the government of all but the highest ranks went out into the country to gather fuel. Many people were crushed by the falling walls of burned houses. At no time during the decadence of Han did misery press harder than at this period.



A poem written in pity for the sufferings of that time says:

Mortally wounded, the white serpent poured forth its
life blood at Mangdang Hills;

Blood-red pennons of war waved then in every
quarter,

Chieftain with chieftain strove and raided each other's
borders,

Midst the turmoil and strife the Kingship even was
threatened.

Wickedness stalks in a country when the King is a
weakling,

Brigandage always is rife, when a dynasty's failing,

Had one a heart of iron, wholly devoid of feeling,

Yet would one surely grieve at the sight of such
desolation.



Imperial Guardian Yang Biao sent a memorial to the Throne, saying, “The decree issued to me some time ago has never been acted upon. Now Cao Cao is very strong in the Shandong Mountains, and it would be well to associate him in the government that he might support the ruling house.”

The Emperor replied, “There was no need to refer to the matter again. Send a messenger when you will.”

So the decree went forth, and a messenger bore it into the Shandong Mountains. Now when Cao Cao had heard that the court had returned to Capital Luoyang, he called together his advisers to consult.

Xun Yu laid the matter before Cao Cao and the council thus: “Eight hundred years ago, Duke Wen of Jin supported Prince Xiang of the declining Zhou Dynasty, and all the feudal lords backed Duke Wen. The Founder of the Hans, Liu Bang, won the popular favor by wearing mourning for Emperor Yi of Chu.

“Now, Emperor Xian has been a fugitive on the dusty roads. To take the lead in offering an army to restore him to honor is to have an unrivaled opportunity to win universal regard. But you must act quickly, or someone will get in before you!”

Cao Cao understood and at once prepared his army to move. Just at this moment, an imperial messenger was announced with the very command Cao Cao wanted, and Cao Cao immediately set out.

At Luoyang, everything was desolate. The walls had fallen, and there were no means of rebuilding them, while rumors and reports of the coming of Li Jue and Guo Si kept up a state of constant anxiety.

The frightened Emperor spoke with Yang Feng, saying, "What can be done? There is no answer from the East of Huashan, and our enemies are near!"

Then, Yang Feng and Han Xian said, "We, your ministers, will fight to the death for you!"

But Dong Cheng said, "The fortifications are weak and our military resources small, so that we cannot hope for victory, and what does defeat mean? I see nothing better to propose than a move into the East of the Huashan Mountains."

The Emperor agreed to this, and the journey began without further preparation. There being few horses, the officers of the court had to march afoot. Hardly a bowshot outside the gate, they saw a thick cloud of dust, out of which came all the clash and clamor of an advancing army. The Emperor and his Consort were dumb with fear. Then, appeared a horseman: he was the messenger returning from the East of Huashan Mountains.

He rode up to the chariot, made an obeisance, and said, "General Cao Cao, as commanded, is coming with all the military force of the East of Huashan, but hearing that Li Jue and Guo Si had again approached the capital, he has sent Xiahou Dun in advance. With Xiahou Dun are ten capable leaders and fifty thousand cavalry. They will guard Your Majesty."

All fear was swept away. Soon after, Xiahou Dun and his staff arrived. Xiahou Dun, Xu Chu, and Dian Wei were presented to the Emperor, who graciously addressed them. Then, someone came to say a large army was approaching from the east, and at the Emperor's command, Xiahou Dun went to ascertain who these were. He soon returned, saying they were Cao Cao's infantry.

In a short time, Cao Hong, Li Dian, and Yue Jin came to the imperial chariot, their names having been duly communicated.

Cao Hong said, “When my brother, Cao Cao, heard of the approach of the rebels, he feared that the advance guard he had sent might be too weak, so he sent me to march quickly for reinforcement.”

“General Cao Cao is indeed a trusty servant!” said the Emperor.

Orders were given to advance, Cao Hong leading the escort. By and by, scouts came to say that the rebels were coming very quickly. The Emperor bade Xiahou Dun divide his force into two parts to oppose them. Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong’s armies threw out two wings with cavalry in front and infantry behind. They attacked with vigor and beat off Li Jue and Guo Si’s cohorts with a severe loss of ten thousand. Then, Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong begged the Emperor to return to Luoyang, and Xiahou Dun guarded the city.

Next day, Cao Cao came with his great army, and having gotten them duly camped, he went into the city to audience. He knelt at the foot of the steps but was called up hither to stand beside the Emperor and be thanked.

Cao Cao replied, “Having been the recipient of great bounty, thy servant owes the state much gratitude. The measure of evil of the two rebels is full, but I have two hundred thousand good soldiers to oppose them, and those soldiers are fully equal to securing the safety of Your Majesty and the Throne. The preservation of the state sacrifice is the matter of real moment.”

High honors were conferred on Cao Cao. He was appointed Commander of Capital District, Minister of War, and granted Military Insignia.

The two rebels, Li Jue and Guo Si, wished to attack Cao Cao's army while fatigued from its long march.

But their adviser, Jia Xu, opposed this, saying, "There is no hope of victory. He has both strong soldiers and brave leaders. Submission may bring us amnesty."

Li Jue was angry at the suggestion, crying, "Do you wish to dishearten the army?" And he drew his sword on Jia Xu. But the other officers interceded and saved the adviser.

That same night, Jia Xu stole out of the camp and, quite alone, took his way home to his native village.

Soon, the rebels decided to offer battle. In reply, Cao Cao sent out Xu Chu, Cao Ren, and Dian Wei with three hundred horsemen. These three leaders dashed into the rebels' army but quickly retired. This maneuver was repeated, and again repeated, before the real battle array was formed.

Then, Li Xian and Li Bie, nephews of Li Jue, rode out. At once, from Cao Cao's side dashed out Xu Chu and cut down Li Xian. Li Bie was so startled that he fell out of the saddle. He too was slain. The victor Xu Chu rode back to his own side with the two heads.

When Xu Chu offered them to the chief, Cao Cao patted him on the back, crying, "You are really my Fan Kuai!"

Next, a general move forward was made, Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong leading the two wings and Cao Cao in the center. They advanced to the roll of the drum. The rebels fell back before them and presently fled. They pursued, Cao Cao himself leading, sword in hand. The slaughter went on till night. Tens of thousands were killed and many more surrendered.

Li Jue and Guo Si went west, flying in panic like dogs from a falling house. Having no place of refuge, they took to the hills and hid among the

brushwood.

Cao Cao's army returned and camped again near the capital.

Then, Yang Feng and Han Xian said one to another, "This Cao Cao has done a great service, and he will be the man in power. There will be no place for us."

So they presented to the Emperor that they wished to pursue the rebels and, under this excuse, withdrew their army and camped at Daliang.

One day, the Emperor sent to summon Cao Cao to audience. The messenger was called in. Cao Cao noticed that the messenger looked remarkably well and could not understand it, seeing that everyone else looked hungry and famine-stricken.

So Cao Cao said, "You look plump and well, Sir; how do you manage it?"

"Only this: I have lived meager for thirty years."

Cao Cao nodded, "What office do you hold?"

"I am a graduate recommended for filial piety and honesty. I had offices under Yuan Shao and Zhang Yang but came here when the Emperor returned. Now, I am one of the secretaries. I am a native of Dingtao, and my name is Dong Zhao."

Cao Cao got up from his place and crossed over, saying, "I have heard of you. How happy I am to meet you!"

Then, wine was brought into the tent, and Xun Yu was called in and introduced. While they were talking, a man came in to report that a party

was moving eastward. Cao Cao ordered to find out whose people these were, but Dong Zhao knew at once.

“They are old leaders under the rebels: Yang Feng and the White Wave General Han Xian. They are running off because you have come, Illustrious Sir!”

“Do they mistrust me?” said Cao Cao.

“They are not worthy of your attention. They are a poor lot.”

“What of this departure of Li Jue and Guo Si?”

“Tigers without claws, birds without wings—they will not escape you very long. They are not worth thinking about.”

Cao Cao saw that he and his guest had much in common, so he began to talk of affairs of state.

Said Dong Zhao, “You, Illustrious Sir, with your noble army have swept away rebellion and have become the mainstay of the Throne, an achievement worthy of the ancient Five Protectors. But the officials will look at it in very different ways and not all favorably to you. I think you would not be wise to remain here, and I advise a change of capital to Xuchang. However, it must be remembered that the restoration of the capital has been published far and wide and the attention of all the people is concentrated on Luoyang, hoping for a period of rest and tranquility. Another move will displease many. However, the performance of extraordinary deeds may mean the acquisition of extraordinary merit. It is for you to decide.”

“Exactly my own inclination!” said Cao Cao, seizing his guest’s hand. “But are there not dangers? Yang Feng at Daliang and the court officials?”

“They are easily managed. Write to Yang Feng and set his mind at rest. Then, say to the high officials plainly that there is no food in the capital

here and so you are going to another place where there is and where there is no danger of scarcity. When they hear it, they will approve.”

Cao Cao had now decided; and as his guest took leave, Cao Cao seized his hands once more, saying, “I shall need your advice in future affairs.”

Dong Zhao thanked and left. Thereafter, Cao Cao and his advisers secretly discussed the change of capital.

Court Counselor Wang Li, who was an astrologer, said to Liu Cai, Royal Clan Recorder, “I have been studying the stars. Since last spring, Venus has been nearing the Guard star in the neighborhood of the Measure, and the Cowherd (the Great Bear and Vega) crossing the River of Heaven. Mars has been retrograding and came into conjunction with Venus in the Gate of Heaven so that metal (Venus) and fire (Mars) are mingled. Thence must emerge a new ruler. The aura of the Hans is exhausted, and the ancient states of Jin and Wei must increase.”

A secret memorial was presented to the Emperor, saying:

“The Mandate of Heaven has its course, and the five elements—metal, wood, water, fire, and earth—are out of proportion. Earth attacking fire is Wei attacking Han, and the successor to the empire of Han is in Wei.”

Cao Cao heard of these sayings and memorials and sent a man to the astrologer to say, “Your loyalty is well known, but the ways of Heaven are past finding out. The less said the better.”

Then, Cao Cao discussed with Xun Yu. The adviser expounded the meaning thus: “The virtue of Han was fire; your element is earth. Xuchang

is under the influence of earth, and so your fortune depends on getting there. Fire can overcome earth, as earth can multiply wood. Dong Zhao and Wang Li agree, and you have only to bide your time.”

So Cao Cao made up his mind.

Next day at court, he said, “Luoyang is deserted and cannot be restored, nor can it be supplied easily with food. Xuchang is a noble city, resourceful and close to Luyang, which is a grain basin. It is everything that a capital should be. I venture to request that the court move thither.”

The Emperor dared not oppose and the officials were too overawed to have any independent opinion, so they chose a day to set out. Cao Cao commanded the escort, and the officials all followed. When they had traveled a few stages, they saw before them a high mound, and from behind this, there arose the beating of drums.

Then, Yang Feng and Han Xian came out and barred the way. In front of all, stood Xu Huang, who shouted, “Cao Cao is stealing away the Emperor!”

Cao Cao rode out and took a good look at this man. He seemed a fine fellow, and in his secret soul, Cao Cao greatly admired him, although he was an enemy. Then Cao Cao ordered Xu Chu to go and fight Xu Huang. The combat was battleax against broadsword, and the two men fought more than half-a-hundred bouts without advantage to either side. Cao Cao then beat the gongs and drew off his troops.

In the camp, a council was called. Cao Cao said, “The two rebels themselves need not be discussed, but Xu Huang is a fine general, and I was unwilling to use any great force against him. I want to win him over to our side.”

Then stepped out Man Chong, replying, "Do not let that trouble you. I will have a word with him. I shall disguise myself as a soldier this evening and steal over to the enemy's camp to talk to him. I shall incline his heart toward you."

That night, Man Chong, duly disguised, got over to the other side and made his way to the tent of Xu Huang, who sat there by the light of a candle. Xu Huang was still wearing his coat of mail.

Suddenly, Man Chong ran out in front and saluted, saying, "You have been well since we parted, old friend?"

Xu Huang jumped up in surprise, gazed into the face of the speaker a long time, and presently said, "What! You are Man Chong of Shanyang? What are you doing here?"

"I am an officer in General Cao Cao's army. Seeing my old friend out in front of the army today, I wanted to say a word to him. So I took the risk of stealing in this evening, and here I am."

Xu Huang invited Man Chong in, and they sat down.

Then said Man Chong, "There are very few as bold as you on Earth. Why, then, do you serve such as your present chiefs, Yang Feng and Han Xian? My master is the most prominent man in the world—a man who delights in wise people and appreciates soldiers as everyone knows. Your valor today won his entire admiration, and so he took care that the attack was not vigorous enough to sacrifice you. Now he has sent me to invite you to join him. Will you not leave darkness for light and help him in his magnificent task?"

Xu Huang sat a long time pondering over the offer. Then he said, with a sigh, "I know my masters are doomed to failure, but I have followed their fortunes a long time and do not like to leave them."

“But you know the prudent bird selects its tree, and the wise servant chooses his master. When one meets a worthy master and lets him go, one is very reckless.”

“I am willing to do what you say,” said Xu Huang, rising.

“Why not put these two to death as an introductory gift?” said Man Chong.

“It is very wrong for a servant to slay his master. I will not do that.”

“True. You are really a good man.”

Then Xu Huang, taking only a few of his own horsemen with him, left that night and deserted to Cao Cao. Soon, someone took the news to Yang Feng, who at the head of a thousand strong horsemen, set out to capture the deserter.

As they drew close, Yang Feng called out, “Betrayer! Stop there!”

But Yang Feng fell into an ambush. Suddenly, the whole mountain side was lit up with torches and out sprang Cao Cao’s troops, he himself being in command.

“I have been waiting here a long time. Do not run away!” cried Cao Cao.

Yang Feng was completely surprised and tried to draw off but was quickly surrounded. Then, Han Xian came to his rescue, and a confused battle began. Yang Feng succeeded in escaping, while Cao Cao kept up the attack on the two disordered armies. A great number of the rebels gave in, and the leaders found they had too few men left to maintain their independence, so they betook themselves to Yuan Shu.

When Cao Cao returned to camp, the newly-surrendered general was presented and well-received. Then, again the cavalcade set out for the new capital. In due time, they reached Xuchang, and they built palaces and halls,

an ancestral temple and an altar, terraces and public offices. The walls were repaired, storehouses built, and all put in order.

Then came the rewards for Cao Cao's adherents and others. Dong Cheng and thirteen others were raised to rank of lordship. All good service was rewarded; certain others again, who deserved it, were punished, all according to Cao Cao's sole decision.

Cao Cao made himself Prime Minister, Regent Marshal, and Lord of Wuping. Xun Yu was made Imperial Counselor and Chair of the Secretariat; Xun You, Minister of War; Guo Jia, Minister of Rites and Religion; Liu Ye, Minister of Works; Mao Jie, Minister of Agriculture, and together with Ren Jun, they were put over the supervision of military farms and stores. Cheng Yu was appointed Lord of Dongping; Dong Zhao, Magistrate of Luoyang; Man Chong, Magistrate of Xuchang. Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Cao Ren, Cao Hong, Lu Qian, Li Dian, Yue Jin, Yu Jin, and Xu Huang were made Commanders; Xu Chu and Dian Wei, Commanders of Capital District. All good service received full recognition.

Cao Cao was then the one man of the court. All memorials went first to him and were then submitted to the Throne.

When state matters were in order, Cao Cao gave a great banquet in his private quarters to all his advisers, and affairs outside the capital were the subject of discussion.

Then, Cao Cao said, "Liu Bei has his army at Xuzhou, and he carries on the administration of the region. Lu Bu fled to Liu Bei when defeated, and Liu Bei gave Lu Bu Xiaopei to live in. If these two agreed to join forces and attack, my position would be most serious. What precautions can be taken?"

Then rose Xu Chu, saying, "Give me fifty thousand picked soldiers, and I will give the Prime Minister both their heads!"

Xun Yu said, “O Leader, you are brave, but we must consider the present circumstance. We cannot start a sudden war just as the capital has been changed. However, there is a certain ruse known as ‘Rival Tigers and One Prey.’ Liu Bei has no decree authorizing him to govern the region. You, Sir Prime Minister, can procure one for him, and when sending it, and so conferring upon him the right in addition to his might, you can enclose a private note telling him to get rid of Lu Bu. If he does, then he will have lost a vigorous warrior from his side, and he could be dealt with as occasions serve. Should he fail, then Lu Bu will slay him. This is the ‘Rival Tigers and One Prey’ ruse: they wrangle and bite each other.”

Cao Cao agreed that this was a good plan, so he sent along a memorial for the formal appointment, which he sent to Liu Bei. Liu Bei was created General Who Conquers the East, Lord of Yicheng, and Imperial Protector of Xuzhou as well. At the same time a private note was enclosed.

In Xuzhou, when Liu Bei heard of the change of capital, he began to prepare a congratulatory address. In the midst of this, an imperial messenger was announced and was met with ceremony outside the gate. When the epistle had been reverently received, a banquet was prepared for the messenger.

The messenger said, “This decree was obtained for you by Prime Minister Cao Cao.”

Liu Bei thanked him. Then, the messenger drew forth his secret letter. After reading it, Liu Bei said, “This matter can be easily arranged.”

The banquet over and the messenger conducted to his lodging to seek repose, Liu Bei, before going to rest, called in his councilors to consider the

letter.

“There need be no compunction about putting him to death,” said Zhang Fei. “Lu Bu is a bad man.”

“But he came to me for protection in his weakness; how can I put him to death? That would be immoral,” said Liu Bei.

“If he was a good man, it would be difficult,” replied Zhang Fei.

Liu Bei would not consent.

Next day, when Lu Bu came to offer congratulations, he was received as usual. He said, “I have come to felicitate you on the receipt of the imperial bounty.”

Liu Bei thanked him in due form. But then he saw Zhang Fei draw his sword and come up the hall as if to slay Lu Bu. Liu Bei hastily interfered and stopped Zhang Fei.

Lu Bu was surprised and said, “Why do you wish to slay me, Zhang Fei?”

“Cao Cao says you are immoral and tells my Brother to kill you,” shouted Zhang Fei.

Liu Bei shouted again and again to Zhang Fei to go away, and he led Lu Bu into the private apartments out of the way. Then, he told Lu Bu the whole story and showed him the secret letter.

Lu Bu wept as he finished reading, “This is that miscreant’s scheme for sowing discord between us.”

“Be not anxious, elder brother,” said Liu Bei. “I pledge myself not to be guilty of such an infamous crime.”

Lu Bu again and again expressed his gratitude, and Liu Bei kept him for a time. They remained talking and drinking wine till late.

Asked Guan Yu and Zhang Fei later, “Why not kill him?”

Liu Bei said, "Because Cao Cao fears that Lu Bu and I may attack him, he is trying to separate us and get us to swallow each other, while he steps in and takes the advantage. Is there any other reason?"

Guan Yu nodded assent, but Zhang Fei said, "I want to get him out of the way, lest he trouble us later."

"That is not what a noble man should do," said his elder Brother.

Soon, the messenger was dismissed and returned to the capital with a reply from Liu Bei: the letter only said the instruction would take time to plan and implement. But the messenger, when he saw Cao Cao, told him the story of Liu Bei's pledge to Lu Bu.

Then said Cao Cao, "The plan has failed. What next?"

Xun Yu replied, "I have another trick called 'Tiger against Wolf,' in which the tiger is made to gobble up the wolf."

"Let us hear it," said Cao Cao.

"Send to Yuan Shu to say that Liu Bei has sent up a secret memorial to the Throne that he wishes to subdue the southern regions around the Huai River. Yuan Shu will be angry and attack him. Then, you will order Liu Bei to dispose of Yuan Shu and so set them destroying each other. Lu Bu will certainly think that is his chance and turn traitor. This is the 'Tiger against Wolf' trick."

Cao Cao thought this good and sent the messenger and with a false edict to Liu Bei. When this came, the messenger was received with all the ceremonies, and the edict ordered the capture of Yuan Shu. After the departure of the bearer, Liu Bei called Mi Zhu, who pronounced it a ruse.

"It may be," said Liu Bei, "but the royal command is not to be disobeyed." So the army was prepared and the day fixed.

Sun Qian said, "A trusty man must be left on guard of the city."

And Liu Bei asked which of his Brothers would undertake this task.

“I will guard the city,” said Guan Yu.

“I am constantly in need of your advice, so how can we part?” said Liu Bei.

“I will guard the city,” said Zhang Fei.

“You will fail,” said Liu Bei. “After one of your drinking bouts, you will get savage and flog the soldiers. Beside, you are rash and will not listen to anyone’s advice. I shall be uneasy all the time.”

“Henceforth, I will drink no more wine, I will not beat the soldiers, and I will always listen to advice,” said Zhang Fei.

“I fear the mouth does not correspond to the heart,” said Mi Zhu.

“I have followed my elder Brother these many years and never broken faith. Why should you be contemptuous?” said Zhang Fei.

Liu Bei said, “Though you say this, I do not feel quite satisfied. I will order Adviser Chen Deng to help you and keep you sober. Then you will not make any mistake.”

Chen Deng was willing to undertake this duty, and the final orders were given. The army of thirty thousand, horse and foot, left Xuzhou and marched toward Nanyang.

When Yuan Shu heard that a memorial had been presented proposing to take possession of his territories, he broke out into abuse of Liu Bei.

“You weaver of mats! You plaiter of straw shoes! You have been smart enough to get possession of a large region and elbow your way into the ranks of the nobles. I was just going to attack you, and now you dare to scheme against me! How I detest you!”

So Yuan Shu at once gave orders to prepare an army of one hundred thousand, under Ji Ling, to attack Xuzhou. The two armies met at Xuyi,

where Liu Bei was encamped in a plain with hills behind and a stream on his flank, for his army was small.

Ji Ling was a native of the East of Huashan Mountains. He used a very heavy, three-edged sword.

After he had made his camp, he rode out and began abusing his opponents, shouting, "Liu Bei, you rustic bumpkin, how dare you invade this land?"

"I have a decree ordering me to destroy the Governor, who behaves improperly. If you oppose, you will be assuredly punished," replied Liu Bei.

Ji Ling angrily rode out, brandishing his weapon.

But Guan Yu cried, "Fool, do not attempt to fight!"

And Guan Yu rode out to meet him. They two fought, and after thirty bouts, neither had an advantage. Then, Ji Ling cried out for a rest. So Guan Yu turned his horse away, rode back to his own array, and waited for Ji Ling.

When the moment came to renew the combat, Ji Ling sent out one of his officers, Xun Zheng, to take his place.

But Guan Yu said, "Tell Ji Ling to come. I must settle with him who shall be tiger and who shall be deer!"

"You: a reputationless leader and unworthy to fight with our general!" replied Xun Zheng.

This reply angered Guan Yu, who made just one attack on Xun Zheng and brought him to the ground. At this success, Liu Bei urged on the army, and Ji Ling's troops were defeated.

They retired to the mouth of River Huaiyin and declined all challenges. However, many of their troops were sent into Liu Bei's camp

for harassment, and many of them were slain. The two armies thus stood facing each other.

In Xuzhou, after Liu Bei had started on his expedition, Zhang Fei placed his colleague and helper, Chen Deng, in charge of the administration of the region, keeping military affairs under his own supervision. After thinking over the matter for some time, he gave a banquet to all the military officers.

When they were all seated, he made a speech: "Before my Brother left, he bade me keep clear of the wine cup for fear of accidents. Now, gentlemen, you may drink deep today. But from tomorrow, wine is forbidden, for we must keep the city safe. So take your fill." And with this, he and all his guests rose to drink together.

The wine-bearer came to Cao Bao, who declined it, saying, "I never drink as I am forbidden by religion."

"What! A fighting man who does not drink wine!" said the host. "I want you to take just one cup."

Cao Bao was afraid to offend, so he drank.

Now, Zhang Fei drank huge goblets with all his guests on every hand and so swallowed a huge quantity of liquor. He became quite intoxicated. Yet he would drink more and insisted on a cup with every guest. It came to the turn of Cao Bao, who declined.

"Really, I cannot drink," said Cao Bao.

"You drank just now: Why refuse this time?" Zhang Fei pressed him, but still Cao Bao resisted. Then, Zhang Fei, in his drunken madness, lost control of his temper and said, "If you disobey the orders of your general, you shall be beaten one hundred strokes!" And he called in his guards.

Here, Chen Deng interfered, saying, "Do you remember the strict injunctions of your Brother before he left?"

"You civilians attend to your civil business and leave us alone," said Zhang Fei.

The only way of escape for the guest was to beg remission, and Cao Bao did so, saying, "Sir, if you saw my son-in-law's face, you would pardon me."

"Who is your son-in-law?"

"Lu Bu."

"I did not mean to have you really beaten, but if you think to frighten me with Lu Bu, I will! I will beat you as if I were beating him!" said Zhang Fei.

The guests interposed to beg him off, but their drunken host was obdurate, and the unhappy guest received fifty blows. Then, at the earnest prayers of the others the remainder, of the punishment was remitted.

The banquet came to an end, and the beaten Cao Bao went away burning with resentment. That night, he sent a letter to Xiaopei relating the insults he had received from Zhang Fei. The letter told Lu Bu of Liu Bei's absence and proposed that a sudden raid should be made that very night, before Zhang Fei had recovered from his drunken fit. Lu Bu at once summoned Chen Gong and told him.

"Xiaopei is only a place to occupy temporarily," said Chen Gong. "If you can seize Xuzhou, do so. It is a good chance."

Lu Bu got ready at once and was soon on the way with five hundred cavalymen, ordering Chen Gong and Gao Shun to follow him with the main body.

Xiaopei being only about fifteen miles away, Lu Bu was under the walls at the fourth watch. It was clear moonlight. No one on the ramparts saw him.

Lu Bu came up close to the wall and called out, "Liu Bei's secret messenger has arrived!"

The guards on the wall were Cao Bao's people, and they called him. Cao Bao came, and when he saw who was there, he ordered the gates to be opened. Lu Bu gave the secret signal, and the soldiers entered, shouting.

Zhang Fei was in his apartment sleeping off the fumes of wine. His servants hastened to arouse him and told him an enemy had gotten the gates open. They said, "Lu Bu got in, and there is fighting in the city!"

Zhang Fei savagely got into his armor and laid hold of his mighty Serpent Halberd. But as he was mounting his horse at the gate, the attacking soldiers came up. He rushed at them but, being still half-intoxicated, made but a poor fight.

Lu Bu, knowing Zhang Fei's prowess, did not press him hard, and Zhang Fei made his way, with eighteen leading guards of Yan, to the east gate, and there went out, leaving Liu Bei's family to their fate.

Cao Bao, seeing Zhang Fei had but a very small force and was still half-drunk as well, came in pursuit. Zhang Fei saw who it was and was mad with rage. He galloped toward Cao Bao and drove him off after a few passes. He followed Cao Bao to the moat and wounded him in the back. Cao Bao's frightened steed carried its master into the moat, and he was drowned.

Once well outside the city, Zhang Fei collected his troops, and they rode off toward the south.

Lu Bu, having surprised the city, set himself to restore order. He put guards over the residence of Liu Bei so that no one would disturb the family.

Zhang Fei, with his few followers, went to his Brother's camp at Xuyi and told his story of treachery and surprise. All were greatly distressed.

"Success is not worth rejoicing; failure is not worth grieving," said Liu Bei with a sigh.

"Where are our sisters?" asked Guan Yu.

"They shared the fate of the city."

Liu Bei nodded his head and was silent.

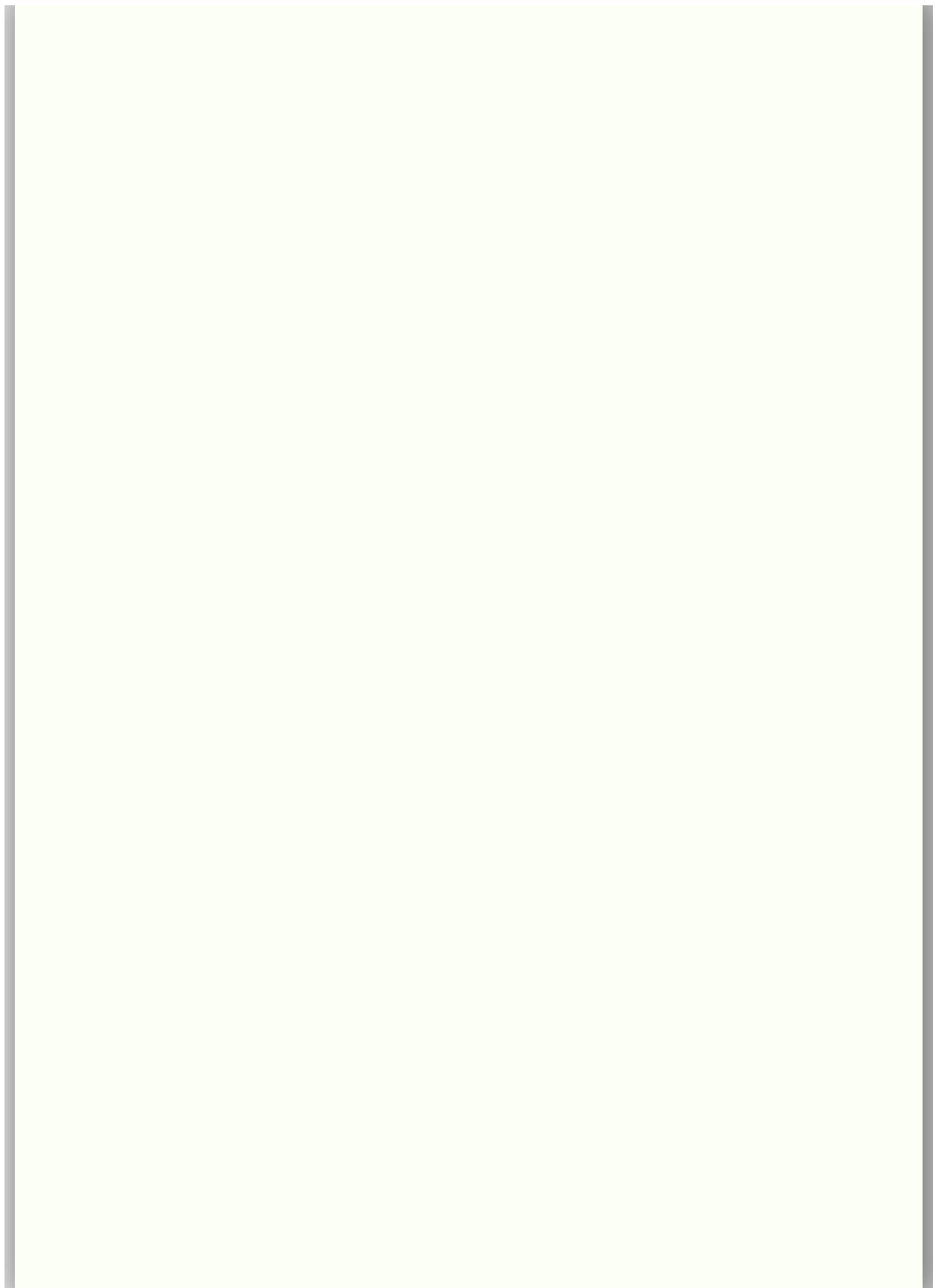
Guan Yu, with an effort, controlled his reproaches and said, "What did you say when you promised to guard the city, and what orders did our Brother give you? Now, the city is lost and, therewith, our sisters-in-law. Have you done well?"

Zhang Fei was overwhelmed by remorse. He drew his sword to kill himself.

He raised the cup in pledge,
None might say nay;
Remorseful, drew the sword,
Himself to slay.

Zhang Fei's fate will be told in the next chapter.





Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IV

CHAPTER 15

TAISHI CI FIGHTS WITH THE YOUNG OVERLORD; SUN CE CUTS SHORT
THE WHITE TIGER KING.

In the last chapter, it was recorded that Zhang Fei was about to end his life with his own weapon in Xuyi.

But Liu Bei rushed forward and caught Zhang Fei in his arms, snatched away the sword, and threw it on the earth.

Liu Bei said, "The ancients had a saying: 'Brothers are as hands and feet; wives and children are as clothing. You may mend your torn dress, but who can reattach a lost limb?' We three, by the Oath of the Peach Garden, swore to seek the same death day.

"The city is lost, it is true, and my wives and little ones, but I could not bear that we should die ere our course be run. Beside, Xuzhou was not really ours, and Lu Bu will not harm my family but will rather seek to preserve them. You made a mistake, worthy Brother, but is it the one deserving of death?"

And Liu Bei wept. His Brothers were much affected, and their tears fell in sympathy.

As soon as the news of Lu Bu's successful seizure of his protector's region reached Yuan Shu, Yuan Shu sent promises of valuable presents to Lu Bu to induce him to join in a further attack on Liu Bei. The presents are said to

have been fifty thousand carts of grain, five hundred horses, ten thousand ounces of gold and silver, and a thousand rolls of colored silk.

Lu Bu swallowed the bait and ordered Gao Shun to lead forth fifty thousand troops. But Liu Bei heard of the threatened attack, so he made inclement weather an excuse to move his few soldiers out of Xuyi for Guangling, before the attacking force came up.

However, Gao Shun demanded the promised reward through Ji Ling, who put Gao Shun off, saying, "My lord has gone away. I will settle this as soon as I can see him and get his decision."

With this answer, Gao Shun returned to Lu Bu, who could not decide what to do.

Then came a letter from Yuan Shu:

"Although Gao Shun went to attack Liu Bei, Liu Bei was not been destroyed, and no reward can be given till he is actually taken."

Lu Bu railed at what he called a breach of faith and was inclined to attack Yuan Shu himself.

However, his adviser, Chen Gong, opposed this course, saying, "You should not. Yuan Shu is in possession of Shouchun, and has a large army, well-supplied. You are no match for him. Rather, ask Liu Bei to take up his quarters at Xiaopei as one of your wings and, when the time comes, let him lead the attack, both south and north. Then, Yuan Shu and Yuan Shao will fall before you, and you will be very powerful."

Finding this advice good, Lu Bu sent letters to Liu Bei asking him to return.

After the flight of Liu Bei, Yuan Shu attacked Guangling and reduced Liu Bei's force by half. When the messenger from Lu Bu came, Liu Bei

read the letter. He was quite content with the offer, but his Brothers were not inclined to trust Lu Bu.

“Such a dishonorable man must have a motive,” said Guan Yu and Zhang Fei.

“Since he treats me kindly, I cannot but trust him,” replied Liu Bei.

So Liu Bei went back to Xuzhou. Lu Bu, fearing that Liu Bei might doubt his sincerity, restored Liu Bei’s family to him, and when Lady Gan and Lady Mi saw their lord, they told him that they had been kindly treated and guarded by soldiers against any intrusion, and provisions had never been wanting.

“I knew he would not harm my family,” said Liu Bei to Guan Yu and Zhang Fei.

However, Zhang Fei was not pleased and would not accompany his Brothers into the city when they went to express their thanks. He went to escort the two ladies to Xiaopei.

At the interview, Lu Bu said, “I did not wish to take the city, but your Brother behaved very badly, drinking and flogging the soldiers, and I came to guard it lest some evil should befall.”

“But I had long wished to yield it to you,” said Liu Bei.

Thereupon, Lu Bu wished to retire in favor of Liu Bei who, however, would not hear of it. Liu Bei returned and took up his quarters in Xiaopei, but his two Brothers would not take the situation kindly and were very discontented.

Said Liu Bei, “One must bow to one’s lot. It is the will of Heaven, and one cannot struggle against fate.”

Lu Bu sent presents of food and other stuffs, and peace reigned between the two houses.

In Shouchun, Yuan Shu had prepared a great banquet for his soldiers, when it was announced that Sun Ce had subdued Lu Gang, the Governor of Lujiang. Yuan Shu summoned the victor, who made obeisance at the foot of the hall of audience. Yuan Shu, sitting in state, asked for details of the campaign and then invited Sun Ce to the banquet.

After the unhappy death of his father, Sun Jian, Sun Ce had returned to the lower region of the Great River, where he had devoted himself to peaceful ends, inviting to his side good people and able scholars. Afterward, when a quarrel broke out between his mother's brother, Governor Wu Jing of Dangyang, and the late Imperial Protector of Xuzhou, Tao Qian, Sun Ce removed his mother with all the family to Que, he himself taking service under Yuan Shu, who admired and loved him greatly.

"If I had a son like Sun Ce," said Yuan Shu, "I should die without regret."

Yuan Shu appointed Sun Ce Commander and sent him on various expeditions, all of which were successful. After this banquet to celebrate the victory over Lu Gang, Sun Ce returned to his camp very bitter over the arrogant and patronizing airs of his patron. Instead of retiring to his tent, Sun Ce walked up and down by the light of the moon.

"Here am I, a mere nobody, and yet my father was such a hero!" And he cried out and wept in spite of himself.

Then, suddenly appeared one who said, laughing loudly, "What is this, Sun Ce? While your noble father enjoyed the light of the sun, he made free use of me. If his son has any difficulty to resolve, why does he not refer it to me also instead of weeping here alone?"

Looking at the speaker Sun Ce saw it was Zhu Zhi, a native of Dangyang, who had been in Sun Jian's service. Sun Ce then ceased weeping, and they two sat down.

"I was weeping from regret at being unable to continue my father's work," said Sun Ce.

"Why stay here bound to the service of a master? The Governor of Dangyang is in distress. Why not get command of an army under the pretense of an expedition to relieve Wu Jing? Escape the shadow of Yuan Shu and take control of Dangyang, then you can accomplish great things."

While these two were talking, another man suddenly entered, saying, "I know what you two are planning, Noble Sirs. Under my hand is a band of one hundred bold fellows ready to help Sun Ce in whatever he wishes to do."

The speaker was one of Yuan Shu's advisers named Lu Fan, from Runan. They three then sat and discussed schemes.

"The one fear is that Yuan Shu will refuse to give you the troops," said Lu Fan.

"I still have the Imperial Hereditary Seal that my father left me. That should be good security."

"Yuan Shu earnestly desires that jewel," said Zhu Zhi. "He will certainly lend you troops on that pledge."

The three talked over their plans, gradually settling the details. Not many days after, Sun Ce obtained an interview with his patron.

Assuming the appearance of deep grief, Sun Ce said, "I have been unable to avenge my father. Now the Imperial Protector of Yangzhou, Liu Yao, is opposing my mother's brother, and my mother and her family are in danger in Que. Wherefore, I would borrow a few thousands of fighting men

to rescue them. As perhaps, Illustrious Sir, you may lack confidence in me, I am willing to deposit the Imperial Hereditary Seal, left me by my late father, as a pledge.”

“Let me see it if you have it,” said Yuan Shu. “I do not want the jewel really, but you may as well leave it with me. I will lend you three thousand troops and five hundred horses. Return as soon as peace can be made. As your rank is hardly sufficient for such powers, I will petition to obtain for you higher rank with the title of General Who Exterminates Brigands, and you can soon start.”

Sun Ce thanked his patron most humbly and soon put the army in motion, taking with him his two new advisers and his father’s generals—Zhu Zhi, Lu Fan, Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, Han Dang, and others.

When Sun Ce reached Linyang, he saw a body of troops in front of him, at their head a dashing leader of handsome and refined mien. As soon as this commander saw Sun Ce, he dismounted and made obeisance. It was Zhou Yu from Shucheng.

When Sun Jian was opposing the tyrant Dong Zhuo, he moved his family to Shucheng, where the Zhou family had lived. And as Zhou Yu and Sun Ce were of the same age all but two months, they became exceedingly good friends and sworn brothers, Sun Ce being the elder in virtue of his two months’ seniority. Zhou Yu was on his way to visit Sun Ce’s uncle, Governor Wu Jing of Dangyang, when the happy meeting took place.

Naturally, Sun Ce confided his projects and inmost ideas to his friend, who at once said, “I shall put my whole life and energy to serve you to reach that grand goal.”

“Now that you have come, the design is as good as accomplished,” said Sun Ce.

Zhou Yu was introduced to Zhu Zhi and Lu Fan. Zhou Yu said, "Do you know of the two Zhangs of Guangling? They would be most useful people in working out your schemes."

"Who are they, the two Zhangs?" said Sun Ce.

"They are men of transcendent genius who are living near here for the sake of tranquility in these turbulent times. Their names are Zhang Zhao and Zhang Hong. Why not invite them to help you, brother?"

Sun Ce lost no time in sending letters and gifts, but they both declined. Then, he visited them in person, was greatly pleased with their speech, and by dint of large gifts and much persuasion, got them to promise to join him. Sun Ce appointed them both Counselors and Generals.

The plan for the attack upon Yangzhou Region was the next matter for discussion. The Imperial Protector, Liu Yao, was of Donglai, a scion of the imperial family, and brother of the Imperial Protector of Yanzhou, Liu Dai. Liu Yao had long ruled in Yangzhou and headquartered in Shouchun. But Yuan Shu had forced him to flee to the southeast of the Great River. He retired to Que and now was battling with Wu Jing in Linyang.

Hearing of the meditated attack on him, Liu Yao summoned his generals to take counsel.

Said General Zhang Ying, "I will take an army and entrench at Niuzhu. No army can get past that, whatever its strength."

Zhang Ying was interrupted by another, who shouted, "And let me lead the van!"

All eyes turned to this man. It was Taishi Ci, who after helping Kong Rong raise the siege of Beihai, had come to serve Liu Yao.

Hearing him offer to undertake the hazardous post of van leader, Liu Yao said, "But you are still young and not yet equal to such a charge. Rather, stay by my side and await my orders."

Taishi Ci withdrew in disappointment.

Soon, Zhang Ying led his army to Niuzhu, where the stores of grain were located. When Sun Ce approached, Zhang Ying went to meet him, and the two armies faced each other above the Bullock Rapid. Zhang Ying roundly abused his opponent, and Huang Gai rode out to attack him. But before the combat had proceeded far, there arose an alarm of fire in Zhang Ying's camp. Zhang Ying turned back, and then Sun Ce advanced in full force, compelling the enemy to abandon their possession. The defeated general fled to the hills.

Now the incendiaries who had brought about this result were two named Jiang Qin from Shouchun and Zhou Tai from Jiujiang, who in these turbulent times had got together a band of kindred spirits and lived by plundering the country along the Great River. They knew Sun Ce by reputation as a man who treated able people very liberally and wished to join him. So they came with their band, three hundred strong, and helped him in this way as an introduction.

Sun Ce welcomed them and gave the leaders rank. After taking possession of stores of all kinds abandoned by the runaways, and enlisting four thousand of those who surrendered into his own ranks, Sun Ce moved forward to attack Shenting.

After his defeat, Zhang Ying returned to his master and told of his misfortune. Liu Yao was going to punish his failure by death but listened to his advisers, who asked for mercy for the unfortunate man, and sent him to command the garrison in Lingling.

Liu Yao himself set out to meet the invaders. He camped south of the Sacred Hills. Sun Ce camped on the opposite side of the hills.

Sun Ce inquired the natives, "Is there a temple of Liu Xiu the Founder of Latter Han in the vicinity?"

They said, "There is a temple to the south on the summit of the hills."

"I dreamed last night that Liu Xiu called me, so I will go and pray there," said Sun Ce.

But Counselor Zhang Zhao advised, "My lord, you should not go, as the enemy is on the other side and you may fall into an ambush."

"The spirit will help me; what need I fear?" So Sun Ce put on his armor, took his spear and mounted, taking with him twelve of his commanders as an escort. They rode up the hills, dismounted, burned incense, and all bowed in the shrine.

Then, Sun Ce knelt and made a vow, saying, "If I, Sun Ce, succeed in my task and restore the authority of my late father, then will I restore this temple and order sacrifices at the four seasons."

When they had remounted, Sun Ce said, "I am going to ride along the ridge and reconnoiter the enemy's position."

His commanders begged him to refrain, but he was obstinate, and they rode there together, noting the villages below.

A soldier of the other side, going along a byroad, quickly reported the presence of horsemen on the ridge, and Liu Yao said, "It is certainly Sun Ce trying to inveigle us to battle. But do not go out."

Taishi Ci jumped up, saying, "What better chance to capture him?" So, without orders, he armed himself and rode through the camp, crying, "If there be any valiant men among you, follow me!"

No one moved, save a low-ranking commander who said, "He is a brave man, and I will go with him." So he also went. The others only laughed at the pair.

Now, having seen all he wished, Sun Ce thought it time to return and wheeled round his horse. But when he was going over the summit, someone shouted, "Stay, Sun Ce!"

Sun Ce turned. Two horsemen were coming at full speed down the next hill. Sun Ce halted and drew up his little escort right and left, he himself with his spear ready.

"Which is Sun Ce?" shouted Taishi Ci.

"Who are you?" was the reply.

"I, Taishi Ci of Laihuang, come to take him prisoner!"

"Then I am he!" said Sun Ce, laughing. "Come both of you together. I am not afraid of you. If I were, I should not be Sun Ce!"

"You and all your crowd come, and I will not blench!" cried Taishi Ci putting his horse at a gallop and setting his spear.

Sun Ce braced himself for the shock, and the battle began. Fifty bouts were fought, and still, neither combatant had the advantage. Sun Ce's commanders whispered to each other their admiration and amazement.

Taishi Ci saw that the spearmanship of his opponent showed no weak point whereby he could gain the advantage, so he decided to resort to guile. Feigning defeat, he would lead Sun Ce to pursue. Taishi Ci, however, did not retire along the road by which he had come but took a path leading around the hill instead of over it.

His antagonist followed, shouting, "He who retreats is no worthy soldier!"

But Taishi Ci thought within himself, *He has twelve others at his back, and I only one. If I capture him, the others will retake him. I will inveigle him into some secret spot and then try.*

So flying and fighting by turns, he led Sun Ce, an eager pursuer, down to the plain. Here, Taishi Ci suddenly wheeled about and attacked. Again, they exchanged half-a-hundred bouts, without result. Then, Sun Ce made a fierce thrust, which his opponent evaded by gripping the spear under his arm, while he himself did the same with his opponent's spear. Neither was wounded but each exerting his utmost strength to pull the other out of the saddle, and they both came to the ground.

Their steeds galloped off they knew not whither, while the two men, each dropping his spear, began a hand-to-hand struggle. Soon, their fighting robes were in tatters. Sun Ce gripped the short lance that Taishi Ci carried on his back, while Taishi Ci tore off Sun Ce's helmet. Sun Ce tried to stab with the short lance, but Taishi Ci fended off the blow with the helmet as a shield.

Then, arose a great shouting. Liu Yao had come up with a thousand soldiers. Sun Ce seemed now in sore straits. His twelve followers came, and each combatant let go his hold. Taishi Ci quickly found another steed, seized a spear, and mounted. Sun Ce, whose horse had been caught by Cheng Pu, also mounted, and a confused battle began between the handful of men on one side and a whole thousand troops on the other. It swayed and drifted down the hillside. However, soon Zhou Yu, leading his troops, came to the rescue, and as evening drew on, a tempest put an end to the fight. Both sides drew off and returned to camp.

Next day, Sun Ce led his army to the front of Liu Yao's camp, and the challenge was accepted. The armies were drawn up.

Sun Ce hung the short lance he had seized from Taishi Ci at the end of his spear, waved it in front of the line of battle, and ordered his soldiers to shout, "If the owner of this had not fled, he would have been stabbed to death!"

On the other side, they hung out Sun Ce's helmet, and the soldiers shouted back, "Sun Ce's head is here already!"

Both sides thus yelled defiance at each other, one side boasting, the other bragging. Then, Taishi Ci rode out, challenging Sun Ce to a duel to the death, and Sun Ce would have accepted.

But Cheng Pu said, "My lord should not trouble himself. I will take him." And Cheng Pu rode forth.

"You are no antagonist for me," said Taishi Ci. "Tell your master to come out!"

This incensed Cheng Pu, who rode at his opponent, and they two fought thirty bouts. The duel was stopped by the gongs of Liu Yao.

"Why did you sound the retreat?" said Taishi Ci. "I was just going to capture the wretch."

"Because I have just heard that Que has been captured. Zhou Yu led a surprise force thither, and Chen Wu was in league with him to betray the city. We have no home now. I will hasten to Moling to get the help of Xue Li and Ze Rong to retake the city."

The army retired, Taishi Ci with it, without being pursued.

On the other side, Zhang Zhao said to Sun Ce, "Zhou Yu's attack is the cause of this move; they are in no mood to fight. A night raid on their camp would finish them."

The army was divided into five divisions for the night surprise and hastened toward the camp, where they scored a victory. Their opponents

scattered in all directions. Taishi Ci alone made a determined stand, and as he could not withstand a whole army, he fled with ten horsemen to Jingxian.

Now, Sun Ce acquired a new adherent in the person of Chen Wu. He was a fighter of seven-span height, sallow of complexion, and red-eyed: an odd looking man. But Sun Ce held him in high esteem, appointed him Commander, and put him in the van of the attack on Xue Li. As Van Leader, Chen Wu and a dozen horsemen made a dash into the enemy's formation, where they slew half-a-hundred men. So Xue Li would not fight but remained within his defenses.

When Sun Ce was attacking the city, a spy came in with the news that Liu Yao and Ze Rong had gone to attack Niuzhu, which made Sun Ce move thither in haste. His two opponents were ready for battle.

“I am here!” said Sun Ce. “You had better give in!”

A general came out from behind Liu Yao to accept the challenge. It was Yu Mi. But in the third bout, Sun Ce made him prisoner and carried him off to the other side. Seeing his colleague thus captured, Fan Neng rode out to the rescue and got quite close. But just as he was going to thrust, all Sun Ce's soldiers shouted, “There is a man behind you going to strike secretly!”

At this, Sun Ce turned and shouted so thunderously loud that Fan Neng fell out of his saddle from mere fright. He split his skull and died. When Sun Ce reached his standard, he threw his prisoner to the ground. And Yu Mi was also dead, crushed to death between the arm and the body of his captor.

So in a few moments, Sun Ce had disposed of two enemies: one crushed to death and one frightened to death. Thereafter, Sun Ce was called the Young Overlord.

Liu Yao had suffered a defeat. The greater portion of his force surrendered, and the number of those slain exceeded ten thousand. Liu Yao himself fled to Yuzhang and sought safety with Liu Biao, Imperial Protector of Jingzhou.

An attack on Moling was the next move. As soon as Sun Ce arrived at the moat, he summoned Commander Xue Li to surrender. Someone let fly a furtive arrow from the wall which wounded Sun Ce in the left thigh so severely that he fell from his steed. Hastily, his officers picked up their wounded chief and returned to the camp, where the arrow was pulled out and the wound dressed with the medicines suitable for injuries by metals.

By Sun Ce's command, the story was spread abroad that the hurt had been fatal, and all the soldiers set up cries of lamentation. The camp was broken up. Xue Li, Zhang Ying, and Chen Heng made a night sortie but fell into a carefully prepared ambush.

Presently, Sun Ce himself appeared on horseback, shouting: "Sun Ce is here still!"

His sudden appearance created such a panic that the soldiers dropped their weapons and fell on their faces. Sun Ce gave orders not to kill them. But their leaders fell: Zhang Ying from Chen Wu's spear thrust as he turned to run away; Chen Heng was killed by Jiang Qin's arrow; and Commander Xue Li was slain in the turbulence. Thus, Sun Ce got possession of Moling.

Having calmed the people, he sent his soldiers away to Jingxian, where Taishi Ci was in command.

Taishi Ci had assembled two thousand recruits in addition to his own troops for the purpose of avenging his master. Sun Ce and Zhou Yu, on the other hand, consulted how to capture him alive.

Zhou Yu planned, "Attack the city on three sides, leaving the east gate free for flight. Some distance off an ambush shall be prepared, when Taishi Ci, his men fatigued and horses spent, shall fall an easy victim."

The latest recruits under Taishi Ci's banner were mostly hillmen and unaccustomed to discipline. Beside, the walls of the city were pitifully low. One night, Sun Ce ordered Chen Wu to strip off his long dress, leave his arms save a dagger, clamber up the ramparts, and set fire to the city. Seeing the flames spreading, Taishi Ci made for the east gate and, as soon as he got outside, Sun Ce followed in pursuit. The pursuit was maintained for some fifteen miles, when the pursuers stopped.

Taishi Ci went on as long as possible, finally halting to rest in a spot surrounded by reeds. Suddenly, a tremendous shouting arose. Taishi Ci was just starting when tripping ropes arose all round, his horse was thrown, and he found himself a prisoner.

Taishi Ci was taken back to camp. As soon as Sun Ce heard the news, he himself rode out to order the guards to leave the prisoner, whose bonds he loosened with his own hands. Then, he took off his own embroidered robe and put it on the captive. They entered the camp together.

"I knew you were a real hero," said Sun Ce. "That worm Liu Yao had no use for such as you, and so he got beaten."

Taishi Ci, overcome by this kindness and good treatment, then formally surrendered.

Sun Ce seized his hand and said, laughing, "If you had taken me at that fight we had near the shrine, would you have killed me?"

"Who can say?" said Taishi Ci, smiling.

Sun Ce laughed also, and they entered his tent, where Taishi Ci was placed in the seat of honor at a banquet.

Taishi Ci said, "Can you trust me so far as to let me go to muster as many as I can of the soldiers of my late master? Under the smart of this defeat, they will turn against him, and they would be a great help to you."

"Exactly what I most desire. I will make an agreement with you that at midday tomorrow you will return."

Taishi Ci agreed and went off. All the generals said he would never return.

"He is trustworthy and will not break his word," said the chief.

None of the officers believed he would come back. But the next day, they set up a bamboo rod in the gate of the camp, and just as the shadow marked noon, Taishi Ci returned, bringing with him about a thousand troops. Sun Ce was pleased, and his officers had to confess that he had rightly judged his man.

Sun Ce thus marched his army to the South Land, and his enemies fled or surrendered before his force. He had now several legions, and the southeast of the Great River was his. He improved the conditions of the people and maintained order so that his adherents and supporters daily increased. He was called Sun Ce the Bright.

When Sun Ce's army approached, the people used to flee in terror, but when it arrived and they saw that no one was permitted to loot and not the least attempt was made on their houses, they rejoiced and presented the soldiers with oxen and wine, for which they were in turn duly rewarded.

Gladness filled the countryside. The soldiers who had followed Liu Yao were kindly treated. Those who wished to join Sun Ce's army did so; those who preferred not to be soldiers were sent home with presents. And thus, Sun Ce won the respect and praise of everyone and became very powerful.

Sun Ce then settled his mother and the remainder of the family in Que, setting his brother, Sun Quan, and Zhou Tai over the city of Xuancheng. Then, he headed an expedition to the south to reduce Wujun.

At that time, there was a certain Yan Baihu, or the White Tiger, who styled himself King of East Wu and ruled over Wujun. His armies stationed at Wucheng and Jiaxing. Hearing of Sun Ce's approach, Yan Baihu sent his brother, Yan Yu, with an army against Sun Ce, and they met at Maple Bridge.

Yan Yu, sword in hand, took his stand on the bridge, and this was reported to Sun Ce, who prepared to accept the challenge.

Zhang Hong tried to dissuade him, saying, "For as much as my lord's fate is bound up with that of the army, he should not risk a conflict with a mere robber. I wish that you would remember your own value."

"Your words, O Wise One, are as gold and precious stones, but I fear that my soldiers will not carry out my commands unless I myself share their dangers."

However, Sun Ce sent forth Han Dang to take up the challenge. Just as Han Dang reached the bridge, Jiang Qin and Chen Wu, who had dropped down the river in a small boat, passed under the bridge. Though the arrows fell in clouds on the bank, the two men rushed up and fiercely attacked Yan

Yu as he stood on the bridge. Yan Yu fled, and Han Dang went in pursuit. But Yan Yu smote up to the west gate of the city, into which he entered.

Sun Ce laid siege to Wujun both by land and water. For three days, no one came out to offer battle. Then, at the head of his army, Sun Ce came to the west gate and summoned the warden. An officer of inconsiderable rank came out and stood with one hand resting on a beam while, with the other, he gave point to his abuse of those below. Quickly, Taishi Ci's hands sought his bow and an arrow was on the string.

“See me hit that fellow's hand,” said he, turning to his companions.

Even as the sound of his voice died away, the bowstring twanged, and the arrow sped and lodged in the beam, firmly pinning thereto the officer's hand. Both sides, those on the wall and those below it, marveled and acclaimed at such marksmanship.

The wounded man was taken away.

When Yan Baihu the White Tiger heard of the exploit, he said, “How can we hope to withstand an army with such leaders as this in it?”

And his thoughts turned toward a peace. He sent his brother Yan Yu out to see Sun Ce, who received him civilly, invited him into the tent, and set wine before him.

“And what does your brother propose?” said Sun Ce.

“He is willing to share this region with you,” was the reply.

“The rat! How dare he put himself on a level with me?” cried Sun Ce.

Sun Ce commanded to put the messenger to death. Yan Yu started up and drew his sword, but out flew Sun Ce's blade, and the unhappy messenger fell to the ground. His head was hacked off and sent into the city to his brother.

This had its effect. Yan Baihu saw resistance was hopeless, so he abandoned Wujun and fled. Sun Ce pressed the attack. Huang Gai captured Jiaxing, and Taishi Ci took Wucheng. Several other southern cities were fallen. The territory was quickly subdued.

Yan Baihu rushed off toward Yuhang in the east, plundering on all sides, till a band of villagers under the leadership of one Ling Cao checked his career of robbery there. Yan Baihu then fled toward Kuaiji.

Ling Cao and his son then went to meet Sun Ce, who took them into his service, and appointed them Commanders as a reward for their service, and the joint forces crossed the Great River.

The White Tiger, Yan Baihu, gathered his scattered forces and took up a position at Western Ford, but Cheng Pu attacked him there and scattered the defenders, chasing them as far as Kuaiji. The Governor of the place, Wang Lang, was on Yan Baihu's side and inclined to support him actively.

But, when Wang Lang proposed this, one of his officers stood forth, saying, "No! No! Sun Ce as a leader is humane and upright, while the White Tiger is a savage ruffian. Rather capture him and offer his person as a peace offering to Sun Ce."

The Governor turned angrily toward the speaker, who was an official named Yu Fan from Kuaiji, and bade him be silent. Yu Fan withdrew, sighing deeply. The Governor went to the help of the White Tiger, with whom he joined forces at Shanyin.

Sun Ce arrived. When both sides were arrayed, Sun Ce rode out and addressed Wang Lang, saying, "Mine is an army of good soldiers, and my aim is to restore peace to this region, but you give your support to a rebel!"

Wang Lang replied, "Your greed is insatiable. Having got possession of Wujun, you want also my territory. I shall avenge the Yans!"

This response greatly angered Sun Ce. Just as battle was to be joined, Taishi Ci advanced and Wang Lang came toward him, waving a sword. Before they had exchanged many passes, Zhou Xin dashed out to help Wang Lang. Thereupon, Huang Gai rode out to make the sides more equal. These latter two were just engaging when the drums rolled on both sides, and a general battle began.

Suddenly, confusion was caused in the rear of Wang Lang's army by the sudden onslaught of a small army. Wang Lang galloped off to see the attackers were Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu. Then, an attack was made on his flank, so that he was in a hopeless position, and he and Yan Baihu and Zhou Xin, fighting desperately to cut an alley out, only just managed to reach the shelter of the city. The drawbridges were raised and the gates closed, and preparations made to sustain a siege.

Sun Ce followed right up to the walls and then divided his troops so as to attack all four gates. Seeing that the city was being fiercely attacked, Wang Lang was for making a sortie, but Yan Baihu opposed this as hopeless against so strong a force outside.

"We can only strengthen our position and remain behind the shelter of the ramparts until hunger forces the besiegers to retire," said Yan Baihu.

Wang Lang agreed, and the siege went on. For several days, a vigorous attack was maintained, but with little success.

In a council, Sun Jing, who was the uncle of Sun Ce, said, "Since they are holding the city with such resolution, it will be difficult to dislodge them. But the bulk of their supplies is stored at Chadu, distant only some ten miles. Our best plan is to seize this place, thus attacking where the enemy is unprepared and doing what they do not expect."

Sun Ce approved, saying, "My uncle's plan is admirable and will crush the rebels."

So he issued orders to kindle watch-fires at all the gates and leave the flags standing to maintain the appearance of soldiers in position while the expedition went south.

Zhou Yu came to utter a warning, "When you, my lord, go away, the besieged will surely come out and follow you. We ought to prepare a surprise for them."

Sun Ce replied, "My preparations are complete, and the city will be captured tonight." So the army set out.

Wang Lang heard that the besiegers had gone, and he went up to the tower to reconnoiter. He saw the fires blazing, the smoke rising, and the pennons fluttering in the breeze as usual and hesitated.

Zhou Xin said, "He has gone, and this is only a strategy. Let us go out and smite them."

Yan Baihu said, "If he has gone, it is to attack Chadu. Let us pursue."

"The place is our base of supply," said Wang Lang, "and must be defended. You two lead the way, and I will follow with reserves."

So Yan Baihu and Zhou Xin went forth with five thousand soldiers and drew near their enemy about the first watch, seven miles from the city. The road led through dense forest. Then suddenly, the drums beat and lighted torches sprang up on all sides. Yan Baihu was frightened, turned his horse, and started to retreat.

At once, a leader appeared in front whom, by the glare of the torches, he recognized as Sun Ce. Zhou Xin made a rush at him but fell under Sun Ce's spear. The men surrendered. However, Yan Baihu managed to cut his way out and fled to Yuhang.

Wang Lang soon heard of the loss and, not daring to return to the city, fled in all haste to the coastal regions. And so Sun Ce got possession of the

city of Kuaiji.

Order having been restored, a few days later, a man came bringing the head of the White Tiger as an offering to Sun Ce. This man was a native of the county. He was of eight-span height, with a square face and wide mouth. He was named Dong Xi. Sun Ce appointed him Commander.

After this, peace reigned in all the southeast. Sun Ce placed his uncle Sun Jing in command of the city and made Zhu Zhi Governor of Wujun. Then, Sun Ce returned to his own place, south of the Great River.

While Sun Ce was absent, a band of brigands suddenly attacked Xuancheng, left in the care of his brother Sun Quan and the leader Zhou Tai. As the onslaught was made on all sides at once, and in the night, the brigands got the upper hand.

Zhou Tai took the youth in his arms and mounted a horse, but when the robbers came on with swords to attack him, he dismounted, and though without mail, met the robbers on foot and slew them as they came up. Then came a horseman armed with a spear, but Zhou Tai laid hold of his spear and pulled him to the earth. Next, Zhou Tai mounted the robber's horse and, thrusting this way and that with the spear, fought his way out. So Sun Quan was preserved, but his savior had received more than a dozen wounds. However, the bandits went away.

These wounds being due to metal would not heal but swelled enormously, and the brave soldier's life hung in the balance. Sun Ce returned and was deeply grieved.

Then, Dong Xi said, "Once in an engagement with some coastal pirates, I received many spear wounds, but a certain wise man named Yu

Fan recommended a surgeon who cured me in half a month.”

“Surely this must be Yu Fan of Kuaiji,” replied Sun Ce. “That is he; he is so called.”

“Yes, truly a wise man. I would employ him.”

So Sun Ce sent two officers to invite Yu Fan, and he came at once. He was treated in most friendly fashion and appointed an official forthwith. Then, the question of treating the wounded man was brought up.

“The surgeon is one Hua Tuo from Qiao, who has perfectly marvelous medicine skill. I will get him to come,” said Yu Fan.

Shortly, the famous Hua Tuo arrived, a man with the complexion of a youth and a snowy beard. He looked more like a saint who had passed the gates of this life. He was treated very warmly and taken to see the sick general’s wounds.

“The case is not difficult,” said the surgeon.

And he prepared certain drugs that healed the wounds within a month. Sun Ce suitably acknowledged his care and skill, and he was allowed to leave with rich rewards.

Next, Sun Ce attacked the brigands and destroyed them, so restoring complete tranquility to the South Land. After this, he set garrisons at all the strategic points in the old state of Wu, and this done, informed the Throne of what he had achieved. He came to an understanding with Cao Cao and sent letters to Yuan Shu demanding the return of the Imperial Hereditary Seal he had left in pledge.

But Yuan Shu, secretly cherishing the most ambitious designs, wrote excuses and did not return the state jewel. In his own place, Yuan Shu hastily summoned about thirty of his officers to a council. Among them

were Adviser Yang Dajiang and Generals Zhang Xun, Ji Ling, Qiao Rui, Lei Bo, and Chen Lan.

Yuan Shu said, “Sun Ce borrowed an army from me and set out on an expedition which has made him master of the South Land. Now, he says nothing of repayment but demands the token of his pledge. Truly he is a boor, so what steps can I take to destroy him?”

Yang Dajiang replied, “You cannot do anything against him, for he is too strongly placed, the Great River as the shield. You must first remove Liu Bei in revenge for having attacked you without cause, and then you may think about Sun Ce. I have a scheme to put the former into your hands in a very short time.”

Yuan Shu went not to destroy the tiger, but instead
Against a dragon forth his army led.

The means Yang Dajiang employed will be made plain in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IV

CHAPTER 16

IN THE CAMP GATE, LU BU SHOOTS THE HALBERD; AT RIVER YU, CAO
CAO SUFFERS A DEFEAT.

Adviser Yang Dajiang knew how to remove Liu Bei.

“What is your plan of attack on Liu Bei?” said Yuan Shu.

Yang Dajiang replied, “Though Liu Bei, now camped at Xiaopei, could easily be taken, Lu Bu is strongly posted at the chief city nearby. And I think Lu Bu would help Liu Bei, if it was only for the grudge he bears against you for not having given him the gold and studs, grain and horses you promised. First of all, you should send Lu Bu a present whereby to engage his affections and keep him quiet while you deal with Liu Bei. You can see to Lu Bu after this is done, and Xuzhou is yours.”

Thereupon, two hundred thousand carts of millet were sent, with letters, by the hand of Han Yin. The gift pleased Lu Bu greatly, and he treated the messenger with great cordiality. Feeling sure of no trouble from that quarter, Yuan Shu sent off one hundred thousand troops against Xiaopei. The army was led by Ji Ling as commanding general, and Lei Bo and Chen Lan as generals.

When Liu Bei heard these things, he called his officers to take counsel. Zhang Fei was for open war forthwith.

But Sun Qian said, “Our resources are too small; therefore, we must lay the position before Lu Bu and ask help.”

“Do you think that fellow will do anything?” said Zhang Fei cynically.

Liu Bei decided in favor of Sun Qian's proposal and wrote as follows:

"Humbly I venture to remind you that I am here by your orders and enjoy repose as the result of your kindness, extensive as the heavens. Now Yuan Shu, moved by a desire for revenge, is sending a force against this place, and its destruction is imminent unless you intervene to save it. I trust you will send an army quickly to protect the town, and our happiness will be inexpressible."

Receiving this, Lu Bu called in Chen Gong, to whom he said, "I have just received gifts from Yuan Shu and a letter, with the intent of restraining me from helping Liu Bei. Now comes a letter from Liu Bei asking help. It seems to me that Liu Bei, where he is, can do me no harm, but if Yuan Shu overcomes Liu Bei and comes to an understanding with the leaders around the Huashan Mountains, then the power of the north is so much nearer, and I should be unable to resist the attacks of so many leaders and should never sleep secure. I will aid Liu Bei; that is the better course for me."

Now, Yuan Shu's force sent against Xiaopei went thither as quickly as possible, and soon the country to the southeast fluttered with pennons by day and blazed with watch-fires by night, while the rolling of the drums reverberated from heaven to earth.

The five thousand troops at Liu Bei's disposal were led out of the city and arranged to make a brave show, but it was good news to him to hear that Lu Bu had arrived and was quite near. Lu Bu camped only half a mile away to the southwest. When Yuan Shu's general, Ji Ling, heard of his arrival, he wrote letters reproaching Lu Bu for his treachery. Lu Bu smiled as he read them.

"I know how to make both of them love me," said Lu Bu. So he sent invitations to both Liu Bei and Ji Ling to come to a banquet.

Liu Bei was for accepting the invitation and going, but his Brothers dissuaded him, saying, "There is some treachery in his heart."

"I have treated him too well for him to do me any harm," said Liu Bei. So he mounted and rode away, the two Brothers following. They came to the camp.

The host said, "Now, by a special effort, I have got you out of danger. I hope you will not forget that when you come into your own."

Liu Bei thanked him heartily and was invited to take a seat. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei took up their usual place as guards.

But when Ji Ling was announced, Liu Bei felt a spasm of fear and got up to go away.

"You two are invited for the particular purpose of a discussion," said the host. "Do not take it amiss."

Liu Bei, being quite ignorant of his intentions, was very uneasy. Presently, his fellow guest entered. Seeing Liu Bei in the tent, and in the seat of honor, Ji Ling was puzzled, hesitated, and tried to withdraw. But the attendants prevented this, and Lu Bu, advancing, laid hold of him and drew him into the tent as if he had been a child.

"Do you wish to slay me?" asked Ji Ling.

"Not at all," replied Lu Bu.

"Then you are going to slay Long-Ears?"

"No, not that."

"Then what does it mean?"

"Liu Bei and I are brothers. Now, General, you are besieging him, and so I have come to the rescue."

"Then slay me," said Ji Ling.

“There would be no sense in that. All my life I have disliked fighting and quarrels, but have loved making peace. And now I want to settle the quarrel between you two.”

“May I ask how you think of doing so?”

“I have a means, and one approved of Heaven itself.”

Then, Lu Bu drew Ji Ling within the tent and led him up to Liu Bei. The two men faced each other, full of mutual suspicion, but their host placed himself between them and they took their seats, Liu Bei on the right hand of the host.

The banquet began. After a number of courses almost in silence, Lu Bu spoke, saying, “I wish you two gentlemen to listen to me and put an end to your strife.”

Liu Bei made no reply, but Ji Ling said, “I have come with an army of one hundred thousand at the express bidding of my master to take Liu Bei. How can I cease the strife? I must fight.”

“What!” exclaimed Zhang Fei, drawing his sword. “Few as we are, we regard you no more than a lot of children. What are you compared with a million Yellow Scarves? You dare hurt our Brother!”

Guan Yu urged him to be silent, saying, “Let us see what General Lu Bu has to say first. After that, there will be time to go to our tents and fight.”

“I beg you both to come to an understanding. I cannot let you fight,” said Lu Bu.

Now on one side, Ji Ling was discontented and angry, on the other, Zhang Fei was dying for a fight, and neither of the two chiefly concerned would signify assent.

Then suddenly, the host turned to his attendants, saying, "Bring my Trident Halberd!"

They did so, and he sat there, gripping that graceful but effective weapon in his right hand. Both guests felt very ill at ease and turned pale.

Lu Bu went on, saying, "I have tried to persuade you to make peace, for that is the command of the Most High. It shall be put to the test."

He then bade his servants take the Halberd outside beyond the gate and set it up.

Then speaking to his two guests, he said, "That gate is one hundred and fifty paces distant. If I can hit that left branch of the halberd-head with an arrow, you will both withdraw your armies. If I miss, you can go away and prepare for immediate battle. I shall stand against either of you who does not abide by what I say."

Ji Ling thought to himself, *That small mark at that distance: how could anyone hit it?*

So he assented, thinking he would have plenty of fighting after his host had missed the mark. Of course, Liu Bei was willing.

They all sat down again, and wine was served. When this had been drunk, the host called for his bow and arrows. Liu Bei silently prayed that Lu Bu would hit the mark.

Lu Bu turned back his sleeves, carefully fitted an arrow to the string, and pulled the bow to its utmost stretch. A slight exclamation escaped him as the bow curved like the harvest moon sailing through the sky. *Twang!* went the bowstring, and the arrow sped like a falling star. And it struck the slender tongue of the halberd-head full and square. A roar of acclamation from all sides greeted the exploit.



The multitude people often hail their praise:

O Lu Bu was a wonderful archer,
And the arrow he shot sped straight;
By hitting the mark he saved his friend
That day at his camp gate.
Hou Yi, the archer of ancient days,
Brought down each mocking sun,
And the apes that gibbered to fright Yang Youji
Were slain by him, one by one.
But we sing of Lu Bu that drew the bow,
And his feathered shaft that flew;
For one hundred thousand soldiers could doff their
 mails
When he hit the mark so true.



Lu Bu laughed aloud at the success of his shot. Dropping his bow, he seized his guests by the hands, saying, “The command of Heaven indeed! And now you cease from fighting!”

He ordered the soldier attendants to pour out great goblets of wine, and each drank. Liu Bei in his inmost heart felt rather lucky; his fellow guest sat silent, nodding his head.

Presently, Ji Ling said, “I cannot disobey your command, General, but let me depart. What will my master say, and will he believe me?”

“I will write a letter and confirm it,” said Lu Bu.

After a few more rounds of the wine, Ji Ling asked that he might have the letter, and after that, departed.

When the Brothers took their leave, Lu Bu again reminded Liu Bei, saying, “Do not forget I have delivered you today!”

Liu Bei thanked him and departed. Next day, the leaders broke camps, and the soldiers were gone.

When Ji Ling got back to the South of River Huai and told the story of the feat of archery and the peacemaking that followed, and had presented the letter, his lord was very wroth.

“Lu Bu repays me for all my grain with this bit of play-acting!” cried Yuan Shu. “He has saved Liu Bei, but I will lead a large army myself and settle both Liu Bei and him.”

“Be careful, my lord,” said Ji Ling. “Lu Bu is braver and stronger than most leaders and has a wide territory. He and Liu Bei together make a powerful combination, not easy to break. But there is another course. I have found out that his wife, Lady Yan, has a daughter just of marriageable age; as you have a son, you could arrange a marriage-alliance with Lu Bu. If his daughter wedded your son, Lu Bu would certainly slay your enemy for you. This is called the ‘Relative-above-Stranger’ plan.”

This scheme appealed to Yuan Shu, who soon set about its accomplishment. He sent presents by the hand of Han Yin, who was to discuss the question.

When Han Yin saw Lu Bu, he said, “My master has an immense respect for you, Illustrious Sir, and he desires to ensure perpetual alliance

between the two families by a marriage, an alliance such as existed between the ancient states of Qin and Jin.”

Lu Bu was well-disposed toward the scheme, but went in to consult his wife. Now Lu Bu had two wives and one concubine. He first married a lady of the Yan family, and she was the legal wife. Then he took Diao Chan as a concubine. And while he was living at Xiaopei, he had married a secondary wife, a daughter of Cao Bao. Lady Cao had died quite young, leaving no issue—neither had Diao Chan borne any children—so that Lu Bu had but one child, this daughter, of whom he was dotingly fond.

When he broached the subject, his wife said, “The Yuans have dominated the regions around the River Huai these many years. They have a large army and are very prosperous. One day, a Yuan will become emperor, and our daughter may hope to be an empress. But how many sons has Yuan Shu?”

“Only this one.”

“Then we should accept the offer. Even if our daughter does not become Empress, Xuzhou has a new ally.”

Lu Bu decided to accept and so treated the messenger with extreme generosity. Han Yin went back with a favorable answer. The wedding gifts were then prepared ready for Han Yin to take to the bride’s family. They were received, and banquets and merry-making filled the whole time.

Next day, Chen Gong went to see the messenger in his lodging, and when the usual ceremonies and greetings had been exchanged, the two men sat down to talk.

When the servants had been sent out of earshot, Chen Gong said, “Who originated this scheme by which Yuan Shu and Lu Bu are to become connections by this marriage so that Liu Bei’s head may fall?”

Han Yin was terrified. "I pray you not to let it get abroad," said he.

"I certainly shall keep it secret. But if there be any delay, some other person will find it out, and that spells failure," said Chen Gong.

"What would best be done?"

"I will see Lu Bu and get him to send the girl immediately so that the marriage may be concluded quickly."

"If it happened thus, my master would indeed hold you in high respect."

With this, Chen Gong took his leave and sought an interview with Lu Bu. "I hear your daughter is to be married to Yuan Shu's son. That is capital, but no one knows when."

"That has yet to be considered," said Lu Bu.

"There were certain fixed rules as to the period between sending presents and consummation of the marriage: Emperors, a year; nobles, half a year; high officers, three months; and common people, one month."

Lu Bu replied, "As to Yuan Shu, Heaven has already put into his hands the Imperial Hereditary Seal, and he will surely arrive at the dignity one day. So, I should think the imperial rule would apply."

"No, it will not."

"The nobles' rule, then?"

"No, nor that."

"The high officers'?"

"Not even that."

Lu Bu laughed, saying, "Then you mean me to go by the rule for common people."

"Nor that either."

“Then what do you mean?”

Chen Gong said, “In the midst of the present troubles, when there is great rivalry among the nobles, do you not see that the others will be exceedingly jealous of your marriage-alliance with such a high family as the Yuans? Suppose you postpone the choice of the day: most likely, when your fine morning arrives, the wedding party will fall into an ambush on the road and the bride be carried off. Then what could be done? My opinion is that you would have done better to refuse. But since you have consented, then carry out the plan at once before the lords hear of it, and so send the girl over without delay to Shouchun. You can hire a lodging there till you have selected the wedding day and the odds are greatly against any failure.”

“What you say is quite to the point,” replied Lu Bu.

He went into the private apartments to see his wife and told her the bride-elect would set out immediately and the trousseau was to be prepared as far as it could be. On his side, he chose some good horses and had a wedding carriage readied. The escort consisted of Han Yin and two of Lu Bu’s generals, Song Xian and Wei Xu. The procession went out of the city to the sound of music.

Now, at this time, Chen Gui, father of Chen Deng, was placidly waiting till the evening of his life passed into night. Hearing this burst of music, he inquired as to the occasion, and the servants told him.

“They are working on the ‘Relative-above-Stranger’ device, then,” said Chen Gui. “Liu Bei is in danger.”

Thereupon, in spite of his many infirmities, he went to see Lu Bu.

“Noble Sir, what brings you here?” asked Lu Bu.

“I heard you were dead, and I came to mourn,” quavered the old man.

“Who said that?” exclaimed his host.

“Once upon a time, you received grand presents from Yuan Shu that you might slay Liu Bei, but you got out by that clever shot at your halberd. Now, they suddenly seek a marriage-alliance thinking to get hold of your daughter as a pledge. The next move will be an attack on Xiaopei and, that gone, where are you? Whatever they ask in the future, grain or troops or anything else, and you yield, will bring your own end nearer and make you hated all round. If you refuse, then you are false to the duties of a relative, and that will be an excuse to attack you openly. Beside this, Yuan Shu intends to call himself emperor, which would be rebellion, and you would be of the rebel’s family: something abominable, which the multitude people would not suffer.”

Lu Bu was much disturbed to hear this. “I have been misled by Chen Gong!” cried he.

So he hurriedly sent Zhang Liao to bring the wedding party, which had been ten miles away, back to the city. When they had come, Lu Bu threw Han Yin into prison and sent a reply to Yuan Shu saying curtly that the girl’s trousseau was not ready and she could not be married till it was.

Chen Gui wanted Han Yin to be sent to Capital Xuchang. But Lu Bu was hesitating what course to adopt, when he heard that Liu Bei was enlisting soldiers and buying horses for no apparent reason.

“He is simply doing his duty. There is nothing to be surprised at,” said Lu Bu at first.

Then came two officers, Song Xian and Wei Xu, saying, “As you ordered us, we went into the Huashan Mountains to purchase horses. We had got three hundred when, on our way back, on the borders of Xiaopei,

some robbers stole half of them. We hear that the real robbers were Zhang Fei and his soldiers, who had taken on the guise of brigands.”

Lu Bu was very angry at this and began to prepare an expedition against Xiaopei. When Liu Bei heard that an attack threatened, he led out his army to oppose it, and the two armies were arrayed.

Liu Bei rode to the front and said, “Elder brother, why have you brought an army against me?”

Lu Bu began abusing him, saying, “That shot of mine at the Archery Feast saved you from grave danger. Why, then, did you steal my horses?”

“I wanted horses, and I sent out to buy them. Would I dare to take yours?” said Liu Bei.

“You stole a hundred and fifty in the person of your Brother Zhang Fei. You only used another man’s hand.”

Thereupon, Zhang Fei, with his spear set, rode out, saying, “Yes! I stole your good horses, and what more do you expect?”

Lu Bu replied, “You goggled-eyed thief! You are always treating me with contempt!”

“Yes! I took your horses, and you get angry. You did not say anything when you stole my Brother’s Xuzhou!”

Lu Bu rode forward to give battle, and Zhang Fei advanced. A reckless fight began, and the two warriors kept it up for a hundred bouts without a decisive stroke. Then Liu Bei, fearing some accident to his Brother, hastily beat the gongs as a signal to retire and led his army into the city. Lu Bu then invested it.

Liu Bei called his Brother and chided him as the cause of all this misfortune.

“Where are the horses?” said Liu Bei.

“In some of the temples and courts,” replied Zhang Fei.

Liu Bei sent a messenger out to speak softly and offer to restore the stolen horses if hostilities were to cease. Lu Bu was disposed to agree, but Chen Gong opposed.

“You will suffer by and by if you do not remove this Liu Bei.”

Under Chen Gong’s influence, the request for peace was rejected, and the attackers on the city pressed harder.

Liu Bei called Mi Zhu and Sun Qian to him to ask advice.

Said Sun Qian, “The one person that Cao Cao detests is Lu Bu. Let us then abandon the city and take refuge with Cao Cao, from whom we may borrow troops to destroy him.”

“If we try to get away, who will lead the van?”

“I will do my best,” said Zhang Fei.

So Zhang Fei led the way; Guan Yu was rearguard; and in the center was Liu Bei with the non-fighting portion. The cavalcade started and went out at the north gate under the bright moon.

They met opposition from Song Xian and Wei Xu’s men, but the soldiers were driven off by Zhang Fei, and the besieging force was passed without difficulty. Zhang Liao pursued but was held off by Guan Yu’s rearguard. It seemed Lu Bu was not dissatisfied at the flight, for he took no personal trouble to prevent it. He made formal entry into the city, settled local affairs, and appointed Gao Shun as Governor.

Liu Bei approached Xuchang and encamped outside the city, whence he sent Sun Qian to see Cao Cao and relate the events that had brought him

there.

Cao Cao was very friendly and said, "Liu Bei is as my brother." Then, Cao Cao invited Liu Bei to enter the city.

Leaving his Brothers at the camp, Liu Bei, with Sun Qian and Mi Zhu, went to Cao Cao, who received him with the greatest respect. The story of Lu Bu's perfidy was again related.

"He has no sense of right," said Cao Cao. "You and I, my brother, will attack him together."

Liu Bei was very grateful. A banquet was then prepared, and it was late evening before the visitor left for his own camp.

Xun Yu then had a conference with his master and said, "If you are not on your guard, Liu Bei will be your undoing. You ought to destroy him. He is too much of a hero."

Cao Cao made no reply and his adviser retired.

Presently, Guo Jia came, and Cao Cao said, "I have been advised to kill Liu Bei. What of such a scheme?"

"A bad scheme," said Guo Jia. "You are the popular champion, pledged to relieve the people from oppression, and only by truth and rectitude can you secure the support of the noble-minded. Your only fear is lest they stay away.

"Now Liu Bei is a clear hero. He has come to you for help and protection, and to put him to death would be to alienate all good people and put fear into the hearts of all the able advisers. Hampered by these difficulties, where will you find those whose help you need? To remove the dangers represented by one man and thereby injure yourself in the eyes of all humankind is a sure means of destruction. These conditions need careful consideration."

“What you say exactly fits in with what I think,” said Cao Cao, greatly pleased with these remarks.

His next step was to petition the Emperor to give Liu Bei the imperial protectorship of Yuzhou.

Again, Cheng Yu said, “Liu Bei is certain to rise to the top. He will never remain in a subordinate position. You had better remove him.”

Cao Cao answered, “Now is just the time to make use of good people. I will not forfeit the regard of the world for the sake of removing one individual. Guo Jia and I both see this in the same light.”

Wherefore, Cao Cao rejected all persuasion to work against Liu Bei but sent him three thousand soldiers and ten thousand carts of grain and set him on his way to Yuzhou. Liu Bei was to march to Xiaopei, occupy it, call together his former soldiers, and attack Lu Bu.

When Liu Bei reached Yuzhou, he sent to inform Cao Cao, who prepared to march an army to subjugate Lu Bu. But just then, hasty news came that Zhang Ji, who had gone to the attack of Nanyang, had been wounded by a stray arrow and had died. His nephew, Zhang Xiu, had succeeded to the command of his army, and with Jia Xu as strategist, Zhang Xiu had joined Liu Biao and camped at Wancheng. They intended to attack the capital and get possession of the Emperor’s person.

Cao Cao was placed in a quandary. He would go to attack this combination, but he feared that Lu Bu would attack the capital if he left it. So he sought the advice of Xun Yu.

Said the Adviser, “Lu Bu has no notion of a policy. He is led astray by any little advantage that presents itself to his eyes. All you need do is to obtain promotion for him, giving him some additional title, and tell him to make peace with Liu Bei, and he will do it. Lu Bu is no threat, then.”

“Good,” said Cao Cao. And he acted upon the hint and sent an Imperial Legate, Wang Ze, to Xuzhou with the official announcement and a letter urging peace, while he went on with preparations to meet the other danger from Zhang Xiu.

When ready, Cao Cao marched out with one hundred fifty thousand troops in three divisions. Xiahou Dun was the Van Leader, and they went to the River Yu and camped there.

Jia Xu succeeded in persuading Zhang Xiu of the hopelessness of resistance. “You would do well to surrender, since Cao Cao’s army is too large for you to oppose,” said Jia Xu.

Seeing the truth of this, Zhang Xiu sent his adviser to propose submission. Cao Cao was greatly pleased with the messenger, admiring his ready and fluent repartee, and tried to win him to his service.

“I was formerly with Li Jue and was guilty with him. Now, I am with Zhang Xiu, who esteems my advice, and I should not like to abandon him,” said Jia Xu.

Jia Xu left and, next day, conducted his master into Cao Cao’s presence. Cao Cao was very generous. Then, he entered Wancheng with a small force, the greater part of the army being put in camp outside, where the lines extended some three miles. Great banquets were given every day by Zhang Xiu, and Cao Cao was always being entertained.

One day, when Cao Cao returned to his quarters in a more-than-usual merry mood, he asked the attendants, “Are there singing girls in the city?”

His nephew, Cao Amin, heard the question and said, “Peeping through one of the partitions last evening, I saw a perfectly beautiful woman in one

of the courts. They told me she was the wife of Zhang Ji, Zhang Xiu's uncle. She is very lovely."

Cao Cao, inflamed by the description given him of the beauty, told his nephew to go and bring her to visit him. Cao Amin did so, supported by an armed escort, and very soon, the woman stood before Cao Cao. She was a beauty indeed, and Cao Cao asked her name.

She replied, "Thy handmaid was wife to Zhang Ji; I was born of the Zhou family."

"Do you know who I am?"

"I have known the Prime Minister by reputation a long time. I am happy to see him and be permitted to bow before him," said she.

"It was for your sake that I allowed Zhang Xiu to submit; otherwise I would have slain him and cut him off root and branch," said Cao Cao.

"Indeed, then, I owe my very life to you; I am very grateful," said she.

"To see you is a glimpse of paradise, but there is one thing I should like better. I hope, this night, we can share the same pillow together and, tomorrow, go to the capital, where we can enjoy all the luxuries of life. What do you say to that, my lady?"

She could but thank him. "But Zhang Xiu will greatly wonder at my prolonged absence, and gossips will begin to talk," said she.

"If you like, you can leave the city tomorrow."

She did so, but instead of going at once to the capital, she stayed with him among the tents, where Dian Wei was appointed as a special guard over her apartments. Cao Cao was the only person whom she saw, and he passed the days in idle dalliance with the lady, quite content to let time flow by.

But people told Zhang Xiu what had gone amiss, and he was angry at the shame brought upon the family.

He confided his trouble to Jia Xu, who said, "Keep this secret, wait till he appears again to carry on business, and then do so and so."

A plan was arranged quite secretly.

Next day, Zhang Xiu went into Cao Cao's tent, saying, "Since the surrendered troops are deserting in great number, it would be well to camp them in the center of your camp to prevent this."

Cao Cao gave the permission, and Zhang Xiu moved and placed his army in four camps.

But Dian Wei, the especial guard of Cao Cao's tent, was a man to be feared, being both brave and powerful. It was hard to know how to attack him. So counsel was taken with Hu Juer, the commander of one camp and a man of enormous strength and activity. He could carry a burden of six hundred pounds two hundred miles in a day.

Hu Juer proposed a plan. He said, "The fearsome thing about Dian Wei is his double halberds. But get him to come to a party and make him quite drunk before you send him back. I will mingle among his escort and so get into his tent and steal away his weapons. One needs not fear him, then."

So the necessary arms were prepared and orders given in the various camps. This done, Zhang Xiu gave a banquet, and the intended victim was invited and plied vigorously with wine so that he was quite intoxicated when he left. And, as arranged, Hu Juer mingled with his escort and made away with his weapons.

That night, when Cao Cao was at supper with Lady Zhou, he heard the voices of men and neighing of horses and sent out to ask what it meant. They told him it was the night patrol going the rounds, and he was satisfied.

Near the second watch of the night, again was heard some noise in the rear of his tent, and one of the fodder carts was reported to be burning.

“One of the soldiers has dropped a spark; there is nothing to be alarmed at,” said Cao Cao.

But very soon, the fire spread on all sides and became alarming. Cao Cao called Dian Wei. But he, usually so alert, was lying down quite intoxicated.

However, the beating of gongs and rolling of drums mingling with his dreams awoke Dian Wei, and he jumped up. His trusty halberds had disappeared. The enemy was near. He hastily snatched up an infantryman’s sword and rushed out. At the gate, he saw a crowd of spearmen just bursting in. Dian Wei rushed at them, slashing all around him, and twenty or more fell beneath his blows. The others drew back. But the spears stood around him like reeds on the river bank. Being totally without mail, he was soon wounded in several places. He fought desperately till his sword snapped and was no longer of any use. Throwing it aside, he seized a couple of soldiers and, with their bodies as weapons, felled ten of his opponents. The others dared not approach, but they shot arrows at him. These fell thick as rain, but he still maintained the gate against the assailants.

However, the mutineers got in by the rear of the camp, and they wounded Dian Wei in the back with spear thrusts. Uttering a loud cry, he fell. The blood gushed from the wound in torrents, and he died. Even after he was dead, not a man dared to come in by the main gate.

Cao Cao, relying on Dian Wei to hold the main gate, had fled in haste by the rear gate. Cao Amin accompanied him on foot. Then, Cao Cao was wounded by an arrow in the arm, and three arrows struck his horse.

However, fortunately, the horse was a fine Dawan beast full of spirit and, in spite of its wounds, it bore its master swiftly and well as far as the bank of River Yu.

Here, some of the pursuers caught up, and Cao Amin was hacked to pieces. Cao Cao dashed into the river and reached the far side, but there an arrow struck his steed in the eye and it fell. Cao Cao's eldest son, Cao Ang, dismounted and yielded his horse to his father, who galloped on. Cao Ang was killed by arrows, but Cao Cao himself got away. Soon after, he met several of his officers who had rallied a few troops.

The soldiers of Qingzhou, under Xiahou Dun, seized the occasion to plunder the people. Yu Jin took his army, fell upon them, and slew many. Thus, he protected and appeased the people. The plunderers, meeting Cao Cao on the road, knelt down howling and said Yu Jin had mutinied and attacked them. Cao Cao was surprised, and he gave order to Xiahou Dun, Xu Chu, Li Dian, and Yue Jin to attack Yu Jin.

Now when Yu Jin saw his master and a great company approaching, he at once stopped the attack and set his troops to make a camp.

An officer asked him, "The Qingzhou soldiers say you have turned traitor. Why do you not explain now that the Prime Minister has arrived? Why first make a camp?"

Yu Jin replied, "Our enemies are coming up in our rear and are very close. It is necessary to prepare for defense, or we shall not withstand them. Explanation is a small matter, but defense is very important."

Soon after the camp was finished, Zhang Xiu fell upon them. Yu Jin himself rode out to face them. Zhang Xiu drew back. The other generals of Yu Jin, seeing him advance thus boldly, also attacked, and Zhang Xiu was overcome. They pursued him a great distance until his force was almost annihilated. With the miserable remnant he finally fled to Liu Biao.

Cao Cao's army reformed, and the commanders mustered. Then, Yu Jin went to see his master and told him of the conduct of the Qingzhou soldiers and their looting and why he had attacked them.

“Why did you not tell me before you made the camp?”

Yu Jin related what had occurred.

Said Cao Cao, “When the first thought of a leader in the time of greatest stress is to maintain order and to strengthen his defenses, giving no thought to slander but shouldering his burdens bravely, and when he thereby turns a defeat into a victory, who, even of the ancient leaders, can excel Yu Jin?”

Cao Cao rewarded Yu Jin with a golden armor and the lordship of Yishou. But Cao Cao reprimanded Xiahou Dun for the lack of discipline among his soldiers.

Sacrifices in honor of the dead warrior Dian Wei were instituted. Cao Cao himself led the wailing and paid due honors.

Turning to his officers, he said, “I have lost my first-born son, but I grieve not so heavily for him as for Dian Wei. I weep for him!”

All were sad at the loss of this general. Then, orders were issued to return to the capital.

When Imperial Legate Wang Ze, bearing the imperial decree, reached Xuzhou, he was met by Lu Bu, who conducted him into the residence, where the decree was read. It conferred upon Lu Bu the title General Who Pacifies the East, and a special seal accompanied the mandate. The private mediating letter was also handed over, and the messenger detailed the high

appreciation in which Lu Bu was held by the Chief Minister of State. Lu Bu was greatly pleased.

Next came news that a messenger from Yuan Shu had arrived. When he had been introduced, he said, "My master's project of declaring himself Emperor is advancing. He has already built a Palace and will speedily choose Empress and concubines and would come to the South of River Huai. He is looking forward to receiving the fiancée of the Heir Apparent."

"Has the rebel gone so far?" cried Lu Bu in a rage.

He put the messenger to death and Han Yin into the cage. He drafted a memorial of thanks and sent it to the capital, at the same time sending, too, Han Yin, the unfortunate agent who had arranged the marriage-alliance. He also replied to Cao Cao's private meditating letter, asking to be confirmed in his protectorship of Xuzhou. The letter was sent by the hand of Chen Deng.

Cao Cao was pleased to hear of the rupture of the marriage arrangement between the houses of Yuans and Lus, and forthwith put Han Yin to death in the market place.

However, Chen Deng secretly told Cao Cao, saying, "Lu Bu is cruel, stupid, and facile. The longer he remains, the worse."

"I know Lu Bu quite well," replied Cao Cao. "He is a wolf with a savage heart, and it will be hard to feed him for long. If it had not been for you and your father, I should not have known all the circumstances; you must help me to get rid of him."

"Anything the Prime Minister wishes to do shall have my assistance," was the reply.

As a reward, Cao Cao obtained an annual grant of two thousand carts of grain for Chen Gui and the governorship of Guangling for Chen Deng,

who then took his leave.

As he was saying farewell, Cao Cao took him by the hand, saying, "I shall depend upon you in the eastern affairs."

Chen Deng nodded acquiescence. Then, he returned to Lu Bu, who asked him how the visit was.

Chen Deng told him, "My father received a generous annuity, and I was made Governor of Guangling."

Lu Bu enraged, saying, "You did not ask Xuzhou for me, but you got something for yourself. Your father advised me to help Cao Cao by breaking off the marriage, and now I get nothing at all of what I asked, while you and your father get everything. I have been victimized by your father." He threatened Chen Deng with his sword.

Chen Deng only laughed, saying, "O General, how unwary you are!"

"I, unwary?"

"When I saw Cao Cao, I said that to keep you going was like feeding a tiger. The tiger must be kept fully fed or he would eat humans. But Cao Cao laughed and replied, 'No, not that. One must treat the Commander like a falcon. Not feed it till the foxes and hares are done. Hungry, the bird is of use; full-fed it flies away.'

"I asked who were the quarry. He replied, 'Yuan Shu of the South of River Huai, Sun Ce of the South Land, Yuan Shao of Jizhou, Liu Biao of Jingzhou, Liu Zhang of Yizhou, and Zhang Lu of Hanzhong: these are the foxes and hares.'"

Lu Bu threw aside his sword and laughed, saying, "Yes, he understands me!"

But just about that time came news of the advance of Yuan Shu on Xuzhou, and that frightened Lu Bu.

When discord rose between Qin and Jin,
They were attacked by Yue and Wu,
And when a promised bride never came,
An army marched to enforce the claim.

How all this fell out will be shown in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IV

CHAPTER 17

YUAN SHU MARCHES OUT SEVEN ARMIES; CAO CAO AND THREE
GENERALS JOIN FORCES.

The South of River Huai was very fruitful, and Yuan Shu, as governor of such a large territory, was very influential. He was not a little puffed up. The possession of the Imperial Hereditary Seal, pledged by Sun Ce, added to his pride, he seriously thought of assuming the full style.

As a preliminary, he assembled all his officers and addressed them thus: "The Supreme Ancestor, the Founder of Han Dynasty, was only a very minor official, and yet he became ruler of the empire. The dynasty has endured four centuries, and its measure of fortune has run out. It no longer possesses authority; the cauldron is on the point of boiling over. My family has held the highest offices of state for four generations and is universally respected. Wherefore, I wish, in response to the will of Heaven and the desire of the people, to assume the Imperial Dignity. What think ye of the proposal, my officers?"

Secretary Yan Xiang rose in opposition at once, saying, "You may not do this. King Wen, the Ancestor of the Zhou, was of distinguished virtue and held many offices. Till the last years of the Shang Dynasty, he had two-thirds of the empire. Still, he served and was loyal to the ruling house.

"Your house is honorable, but it is not so glorious as that of Zhou. The Hans may be reduced, but they are not so abominably cruel as those of the Shang Dynasty that they are to be overthrown. Indeed, this should not be done."

Yuan Shu did not hear this with pleasure. Said he, “We Yuans came from the Chen family, the same ancestry with King Shun. By the rule of interpreting the signs of fate, the day has come when Earth (Chen) receives Fire (Liu). Beside, there is an oracle saying, ‘One who replaces the Hans must wade through deep mire.’ My name means ‘the high road.’ It fits exactly. Further than this, I possess the Imperial Hereditary Seal and must become lord of all, or I turn from Heaven’s own way. Finally, I have made up my mind, so if anyone says too much, that person will simply suffer death.”

Yuan Shu arrogated himself the insignia of royalty and assigned Second Glory as the reign title. He set up officials with titles only given by an emperor, rode in a chariot decorated with the dragon and phoenix, and offered sacrifices after the manner of an emperor in the north and south suburbs. Also, he appointed the daughter of Feng Fang his Empress and his son Heir Apparent, and he pressed for the early wedding of Lu Bu’s daughter with his son so that the Palace entourage might be complete.

But when Yuan Shu heard of the fate of his marriage ambassador, Han Yin, who was sent to the capital and was executed, Yuan Shu was very angry and began at once to plan for revenge. He made Zhang Xun his Grand Commander and gave Zhang Xun the command of more than two hundred thousand soldiers with the instruction to invade Xuzhou. The army consisted of seven divisions under seven commanders: Zhang Xun led the Center Army; Qiao Rui, the First Left Army; Lei Bo, the Second Left Army; Han Xian, the Third Left Army; Chen Ji, First Right Army; Chen Lan, Second Right Army; and Yang Feng, the Third Right Army. Each commander was instructed to make a certain town his objective.

The Imperial Protector of Yangzhou, Jin Shang, was ordered to superintend the commissariat, but he declined the office. And so Yuan Shu

put Jin Shang to death.

Ji Ling was in command of the reserves to help wherever he was required. Yuan Shu led thirty thousand troops, and he appointed three generals, Li Deng, Liang Gang, and Yue Jiu, to go up and down and coordinate the grand march.

Lu Bu found out from his scouts that his own Xuzhou City was the objective of Zhang Xun, the towns to be first attacked being Xiaopei, Yidu, Langye, Jieshi, Xiapi, and Junshan. The invading armies were marching twenty miles a day and plundering the countryside as they advanced.

Lu Bu summoned his advisers to a council, to which came Chen Gong, Chen Deng, and Chen Gui.

When all had assembled, Chen Gong said, "This misfortune that has come to us is due to the two Chens, who fawned upon the central government in order to obtain ranks and appointments. Now, remove the evil by putting these two to death and sending their heads to Yuan Shu. Then, he will retire and leave us in peace."

Lu Bu acquiesced and had the two arrested.

But the son, Chen Deng, only laughed, saying, "What is this anxiety about? These seven armies are no more to me than so many heaps of rotting straw. They are not worth thinking about."

"If you can show us how to overcome them, I will spare your life," said Lu Bu.

"General, if you will listen to poor me, the region will be perfectly safe."

“Let us hear what you have to say.”

“Yuan Shu’s troops are numerous, but they are only a flock of crows; they are not an army under a leader. There is no mutual confidence. I can keep them at bay with the ordinary guards of the place and could overcome them by some unsuspected stratagem. If I should fail, I have another plan by which I can not only protect the region but capture our enemy.”

“Let us have it.”

Chen Deng said, “Han Xian and Yang Feng, two of the leaders of our enemies, are old servants of the Han Dynasty who fled from fear of Cao Cao and, being homeless, sought refuge with Yuan Shu. He despises them, and they are dissatisfied with his service. A little letter from the court will secure their help as our allies, and with Liu Bei to help us on the outside, we can certainly overcome Yuan Shu.”

“You shall take the letters yourself,” said Lu Bu.

Chen Deng agreed, and a memorial detailing his intentions was sent to the capital, letters to Yuzhou to Liu Bei, and finally Chen Deng was sent, with a small escort, to wait for Han Xian on the road to Xiapi.

When Han Xian’s army had halted and pitched camp, Chen Deng went to see Han Xian, who said, “What are you here for? You belong to Lu Bu.”

“I am an official of the court of the great Hans. Why do you call me Lu Bu’s man? If you, General, hitherto a minister of state, now serve a traitor, you will nullify the grand services you rendered in protecting the Emperor in the flight from Changan. Beside, the suspicious Yuan Shu will assuredly do you some harm, and you will regret not having taken this opportunity to work against him.”

Han Xian sighed, saying, “I would return to my allegiance if there would be any opportunity.” Thereupon, Chen Deng gave him Lu Bu’s letter

asking for cooperation. Han Xian read it and said, "Yes, I know. You may return to your master and say General Yang Feng and I will turn our weapons and smite Yuan Shu. Look out for a signal flare, and let your master come to our aid."

As soon as Chen Deng got back and reported his success, Lu Bu divided his troops into five divisions, each of ten thousand, and sent them to five threatened towns to meet his enemies. Gao Shun led one army to Xiaopei against Qiao Rui; Chen Gong to Yidu against Chen Ji; Zhang Liao and Zang Ba to Langye against Lei Bo; Song Xian and Wei Xu to Jieshi against Chen Lan. Lu Bu himself led against the main body under Zhang Xun, leaving a small guard in Xuzhou City.

Lu Bu camped ten miles from the walls. When the enemy came up, Zhang Xun thought Lu Bu too strong to attack with the force he had, so he retired seven miles to await reinforcements.

That night, at the second watch, Han Xian and Yang Feng arrived, and soon the flare was lighted as arranged. Lu Bu's troops were admitted to the camp and caused great confusion. Then, Lu Bu gave a full attack, and Zhang Xun was routed and fled. Lu Bu pursued till daylight, when he fell in with one of the other bodies led by Ji Ling. Both sides faced each other, but at the very beginning of the engagement Yang Feng and Han Xian also attacked, and Ji Ling was forced to flee.

Lu Bu went in pursuit, but soon another force came out from the rear of some hills. These looked very imposing. As the ranks opened, Lu Bu saw a leader's guard with flags bearing dragons and phoenixes and representations of the sun and moon, the stars in the four groups of the Great Bear constellation, the five directions of the Earth, golden gourds, silver axes, yellow halberds, white yaks' tails, and all imperial emblems.

And beneath a yellow silken parasol sat Yuan Shu on horseback, clad in silver mail with a sword handle showing at each wrist.

Standing out in front of the array, Yuan Shu railed at his opponent, calling him traitor and bastard. Lu Bu said nothing but rode forward ready for battle, and Li Deng, one of Yuan Shu's leaders, advanced to take the challenge. They met, but at the third bout, Li Deng was wounded in the hand, whereupon his spear fell to the ground, and he fled. Lu Bu waved on the advance, and his men prevailed. The other side fled, leaving much spoil, clothing, mail, and horses.

Yuan Shu's defeated troops had not gone far when a strong army, led by Guan Yu, appeared barring his way.

"Traitor! Why have they not slain you?" cried Guan Yu.

Whereat Yuan Shu fled in great trepidation, and his army melted into fugitives in all directions. The new army fell upon them with great slaughter. Yuan Shu and the remnant of his army retreated into the nether regions of River Huai.

Victory being now secure, Lu Bu, in company with Guan Yu, Yang Feng, and Han Xian, returned to Xuzhou, where there were banquets and feasting and rewards for the soldiers and generals of the five divisions. These over, Guan Yu took his leave and returned to Yuzhou, while Han Xian was appointed Governor of Yidu, and Yang Feng Governor of Langye.

There had been a question of keeping these two in Xuzhou City, but Chen Gui opposed it, saying, "Let them hold those places in Huashan Mountains, which will be all yours within a year."

So Han Xian and Yang Feng were sent to these two cities in the meantime to await orders.

"Why not retain them here?" asked Chen Deng secretly of his father. "They would be a basis for our conspiracy against Lu Bu."

"But if they helped him, on the other hand, we should lengthen the tiger's claws and teeth," said Chen Gui. So Chen Deng could only approve of his father's precautions.

Yuan Shu returned home, burning to avenge his defeat, so he sent to the South Land to ask a loan of troops from Sun Ce.

But Sun Ce said, "On the strength of holding the State Seal, he secretly calls himself Emperor and rebels against the Hans. I would rather punish such a renegade than help him."

So Sun Ce rejected. The letter refusing help added to Yuan Shu's anger.

"What next from this callow youth?" cried Yuan Shu. "I will smite him before I deal with the others."

But his adviser, Yang Dajiang, dissuaded him from this course.

Having refused help to his powerful rival, Sun Ce thought it wise to take measures for his own safety. So he stationed an army at Jiangkou. Soon after came a messenger from Cao Cao bearing Sun Ce's appointment as Governor of Kuaiji with orders to raise an army and reduce Yuan Shu.

Sun Ce was inclined to carry out these orders, but he called a council, at which Zhang Zhao opposed this course.

Said he, “Although recently defeated, Yuan Shu has large army and ample supplies. He is not to be attacked lightly. You had better write to Cao Cao, persuading him to attack the South of River Huai, and we will be auxiliaries. Between the two armies, Yuan Shu must certainly be defeated. If by the remotest chance we lose, we have Cao Cao to come to our rescue.”

This plan was adopted, and a messenger was sent to lay it before Cao Cao.

In the meantime, after the defeat at River Yu, Cao Cao had reached Xuchang where his first thought was to institute sacrifices to his beloved lost leader, Dian Wei. He conferred rank upon his son Dian Man and took him into his own palace to be cared for.

Presently arrived Sun Ce’s messenger with letters, and next came a report that Yuan Shu, being short of food, had made a raid on Chenliu. Cao Cao thought the moment opportune, so he issued orders for the south expedition, leaving Cao Ren to hold the capital. The army marched, horse and foot, one hundred seventy thousand, with commissariat wagons of food to the number of over a thousand. Messages were sent to summon Sun Ce, Liu Bei, and Lu Bu.

Liu Bei was the first to welcome the grand army at his Yuzhou borders, and he was called into the Prime Minister’s tent. After the usual salutations, two human heads were produced by Liu Bei.

“Whose are these?” asked Cao Cao in surprise.

“The heads of Han Xian and Yang Feng.”

“Why did this happen?”

“They were sent to control Yidu and Langye, but they allowed their soldiers to plunder the people. Bitter complaints arose, so I invited them to a banquet, and my Brothers dispatched them when I gave the signal by dropping a cup. Their armies gave in at once. Now, I have to apologize for my fault.”

“You have removed an evil, which is a grand service; why talk of a fault?” And Cao Cao praised Liu Bei’s action.

When the joint army reached Lu Bu’s Xuzhou borders, he came to meet it. Cao Cao spoke graciously to him and conferred upon him the title of General of the Left Army, promising him an official seal as soon as he returned to the capital. Lu Bu was very pleased.

Then, the three armies were made into one force, Cao Cao being in the center, Lu Bu in the left wing, and Liu Bei in the right wing. Xiahou Dun and Yu Jin were Leaders of the Van.

On Yuan Shu’s side, General Qiao Rui with fifty thousand troops was appointed Van Leader. The armies met on the confines of the city of Shouchun. Qiao Rui and Xiahou Dun rode out and opened battle. But Qiao Rui fell in the third bout, and his troops fled into the city.

Then came news that Sun Ce’s fleet was near and would attack on the west. The other three land corps took each one face—Cao Cao on the north, Lu Bu on the east, and Liu Bei on the south. The city of Shouchun was in a parlous state.

At this juncture, Yuan Shu summoned his officers.

Yang Dajiang explained the case, “Shouchun has suffered from drought for several years, and the people are on the verge of famine. Sending an army would add to the distress and anger the people, and

victory would be uncertain. I advise not to send any more soldiers there, but to hold on till the besiegers are conquered by lack of supplies. Meanwhile, Your Highness, with a regiment of guards, will move over to the other side of the River Huai, which is quite ready, and we shall also escape the enemy's ferocity."

So due arrangements was made. One hundred thousand troops under Li Deng, Yue Jiu, Liang Gang, and Chen Ji were appointed to guard Shouchun. Then, a general move was made to the other side of the River Huai. Not only the remaining army went over, but all the accumulated wealth of the Yuan family—gold and silver, jewels and precious stones—were moved also.

Cao Cao's army of one hundred seventy thousand needed daily a considerable quantity of food, and as the surrounding country had been famine-stricken for several years, nothing could be gotten there. So he tried to hasten the military operations and capture the city. On the other hand, the defenders knew the value of delay and simply held on.

After a month's vigorous siege, the fall of Shouchun seemed as far off as it was at first, and supplies were very short. Letters were sent to Sun Ce, who sent a hundred thousand carts of grain. When the usual distribution became impossible, the Chief of the Commissariat, Ren Jun, and the Controller of the Granaries, Wang Hou, presented a statement asking what was to be done.

"Serve out with a smaller measure," said Cao Cao. "That will save us for a time."

"But if the soldiers murmur, what then?"

"I shall have another device."

As ordered, the Controller issued grain in a short measure. Cao Cao sent secretly to find out how the army took this; when he found that complaints were general and the soldiers were saying that the Prime Minister was fooling them, he sent a secret summons to the Controller.

When Wang Hou came, Cao Cao said, "I want to ask you to lend me something to pacify the soldiers with. You must not refuse."

"What does the Prime Minister wish?"

"I want the loan of your head to expose to the soldiery."

"But I have done nothing wrong!" exclaimed the unhappy man.

"I know that, but if I do not put you to death, there will be a mutiny. After you are gone, your wife and children shall be in my care. So you need not grieve on their account."

Wang Hou was about to remonstrate further, but Cao Cao gave a signal. The executioners hustled Wang Hou out, and he was beheaded. His head was exposed on a tall pole, and a notice said:

"In accordance with military law, Wang Hou had been put to death for peculation and the use of a short measure in issuing grain."

This appeased the discontent.

Next followed a general order threatening death to all commanders if the city was not taken within three days. Cao Cao in person went up to the very walls to superintend the work of filling up the moat. The defenders kept up constant showers of stones and arrows. Two inferior officers, who left their stations in fear, were slain by Cao Cao himself. Thereafter, he went on foot to work with his soldiers and to see that work went on continuously and no one dared be a laggard.

Thus encouraged, the army became invincible, and no defense could withstand their onslaught. In a very short time, the walls were scaled, the gates battered in, and the besiegers were in possession. The officers of the garrison—Li Deng, Yue Jiu, Liang Gang, and Chen Ji—were captured alive and were executed in the market place. All the paraphernalia of imperial state were burned, and the whole city was wrecked.

When the question of crossing the river in pursuit of Yuan Shu came up, Xun Yu opposed it, saying, “The country has suffered from short crops for years, and we should be unable to get grain. An advance would weary the army, harm the people, and possibly end in disaster. I advise a return to the capital to wait there till the spring wheat shall have been harvested and we have plenty of food.”

Cao Cao hesitated. Before he had made up his mind, there came an urgent message: “Zhang Xiu, with the support of Liu Biao, is ravaging the country all round. There have been rebellions in Nanyang and Jiangling, and Cao Hong could not cope with it. Cao Hong has been worsted already in several engagements and is in sore straits.”

Cao Cao at once wrote to Sun Ce to command the Great River so as to prevent any move on the part of Liu Biao, while he prepared his army to go to deal with Zhang Xiu. Before marching, Cao Cao directed Liu Bei to station at Xiaopei, as he and Lu Bu being as brothers might help each other.

When Lu Bu had left for Xuzhou, Cao Cao said secretly to Liu Bei, “I am leaving you at Xiaopei to dig a ‘pitfall for the tiger.’ You will only take advice from Chen Deng and Chen Gui, and there can be no mishap. You will so-and-so your ally when needed.”

So Cao Cao marched to Xuchang, where he heard that Duan Wei had slain Li Jue and Wu Xi killed Guo Si, and they presented the heads of these two. Beside, the whole clan of Li Jue, more than two hundred, had been arrested and brought to the capital. They were all put to death at various gates and their heads exposed as warning. The people cheered the end of those two rebels.

In the Emperor's palace, a large number of officials were assembled at a peace banquet. The Emperor rewarded the two successful leaders, Duan Wei with the title of General Who Destroys Rebellion and Wu Xi General Who Wrecks Villainy, and sent them to guard Changan. They came to audience to express their gratitude and marched away.

Then, Cao Cao sent in a memorial that Zhang Xiu was in rebellion, and an army must be sent against him. The Emperor in person arranged the chariot and escorted Cao Cao out of the city when he went to take command of the expedition. It was the summer, the fourth month of the third year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 198). Xun Yu was in chief military command in Xuchang.

The army marched away. In the course of the march, they passed through a wheat region; the grain was ready for harvesting, but the peasants had fled for fear and the corn was uncut. Cao Cao sent proclamations to all villages and towns:

“I am sent on the expedition by command of the Emperor to capture a rebel and save the people. I cannot avoid moving in the harvest season, but if anyone tramples down the corn, he shall be put

to death. Military law is strict without exception, and the people need fear no damage.”

The people were very pleased and lined the road, wishing success to the expedition. When the soldiers passed wheat fields, they dismounted and pushed aside the stalks so that none were trampled down.

One day, when Cao Cao was riding through the fields, a dove suddenly flew up, startling the horse so that it swerved into the standing grain, and a large patch was trampled down. Cao Cao at once called the Provost Marshal and bade him decree the sentence for the crime of trampling down corn.

“How can I deal with your crime?” asked the Provost Marshal.

“I made the rule, and I have broken it. Can I otherwise satisfy public opinion?” Cao Cao laid hold of the sword by his side and made to take his own life. All hastened to prevent him.

Guo Jia said, “In ancient days, the days of the Spring and Autumn History, the laws were not applied to those of the most important. You are the supreme leader of a mighty army and must not wound yourself.”

Cao Cao pondered for a long time. At last he said, “Since there exists the reason just quoted, I may perhaps escape the death penalty.” Then with his sword, he cut off his hair and threw it on the ground, saying, “I cut off the hair as touching the head.”

Then, he sent messengers to exhibit the hair throughout the whole army, saying, “The Prime Minister, having trodden down some corn, ought to have lost his head by the terms of the order; now here is his hair cut off as an attack on the head.”

This deed was a stimulus to discipline all through the army so that not a person dared be disobedient.



A poet wrote:

A myriad soldiers march along and all are brave and
bold,

And their myriad inclinations by one leader are
controlled.

That crafty leader shore his locks when forfeit was his
head,

O full of guile were thou, Cao Cao, as everyone has
said.

On the first news of the approach of Cao Cao with an army, Zhang Xiu wrote to Liu Biao for help. Then, Zhang Xiu led out his troops with his two generals, Lei Xu and Zhang Xian.

When the array was complete, Zhang Xiu took his station in front and, pointing at Cao Cao, railed at him, saying, “O false and pretended supporter of benevolence and justice! O shameless one! You are just a beast of the forest and absolutely devoid of humanity.”

This annoyed Cao Cao, who sent out Xu Chu against the insulter. Zhang Xian came to meet him and fell in the third bout. Then, Zhang Xiu’s troops fled and were pursued to the very walls of Nanyang, only managing to get within just before the pursuit came up. The city was then closely besieged.

Seeing the moat was so wide and deep that approach to the wall would be difficult, Cao Cao’s commanders began to fill up the ditch with earth.

Then with sand bags, brushwood, and bundles of grass, they built a great mound near the wall and on this erected steps so that they could look over into the city.

Cao Cao rode round the city, closely inspecting the defenses. Three days later, he issued an order to make a mound of earth and brushwood at the northwest corner, as he would mount the walls at that point. He was observed from within the city by Jia Xu.

Jia Xu went to Zhang Xiu and said, "I know what Cao Cao intends, and I can defeat him with a counter-move."

Even amongst the very foremost
There is one who leads the way;
Someone sees through your devices,
Be as crafty as ye may.

What the counter-move was will be told in the next chapter.



END OF ACT IV

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT V:

A TIGER, A BEAST, AND A WARRIOR OF
THE DAY:

THE FALL OF LU BU

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act V

CHAPTER 18

GIVING COUNSEL, JIA XU DIRECTS A GREAT VICTORY; BRAVING THE
BATTLEFIELD, XIAHOU DUN LOSES AN EYE.

Jia Xu, having guessed the enemy's intention, had also devised a counter-move. So he went to his chief and said, "I saw Cao Cao very carefully reconnoitering round about the city. He certainly noticed that the southeast corner of the wall had been recently restored with mud bricks of a different kind and that the fencing barrier is badly out of repair. He will try to effect an entrance there. Wherefore, he is making a feint attack at the opposite point. He is piling up straw and making ostentatious preparations whereby to cajole us into withdrawing from the real point of attack to defend the northwest. His troops will scale the walls in the darkness and try to enter at the southeast."

"Supposing your surmise correct, what do you advise?" asked Zhang Xiu.

"The counter-move is plain: you issue an order for our best and bravest soldiers to fill their bellies, to take only the lightest outfits, and to conceal themselves in the houses near the southeast corner. Then, disguise the townspeople as soldiers and send them to pretend to defend the northwest. Tonight, we will let the enemy climb up the walls and enter the city and, once they are fairly within, give the signal, and the concealed soldiers will rush out upon them. We may even capture Cao Cao himself."

The stratagem was decided upon.

Soon, the scouts told Cao Cao: “The defenders of the city have moved to the northwest, where noisy preparations for defense are going on. The opposite corner is left undefended.”

“They have fallen into my trap!” said Cao Cao gleefully.

He ordered his troops to prepare shovels and hooks and all the gear needed for scaling walls, and all day, they kept up the attack on the northwest corner.

But at the second watch, they dispatched the veterans to the opposite corner, where they climbed the wall, broke up the fencing barrier, and got into the city, apparently without disturbing any of the guards. There was no sign of life anywhere as they entered.

But just as they were leaving the wall, suddenly a bomb exploded, and they found themselves in an ambush. They turned to retire, but Zhang Xiu immediately fell on the rear and began a slaughter. Cao Cao’s troops were totally defeated and fled out of the gate into the country. Zhang Xiu kept up the pursuit till daybreak, when he retired into the city again.

Cao Cao then rallied his army and mustered his soldiers. He had lost fifty thousand and much baggage, while two of his generals, Lu Qian and Yu Jin, were wounded.

Cao Cao being thus worsted, Jia Xu advised Zhang Xiu to write off to Liu Biao to cut off Cao Cao’s retreat so that he might be utterly destroyed.

Liu Biao was preparing an army for this purpose, when a scout came to say that Sun Ce had encamped in the river at Hukou.

Kuai Liang said, “This move of Sun Ce in the river is part of Cao Cao’s strategy, and there will be never-ending regret if Cao Cao is allowed to escape. An immediate expedition is necessary.”

Wherefore, Liu Biao moved out with his army to Anzhong to block Cao Cao, leaving Huang Zu to hold Jingzhou's points of vantage. Zhang Xiu, having been informed of the movement of Liu Biao, went with Jia Xu to smite Cao Cao on the rear.

In the meantime, Cao Cao's army, marching very leisurely, had arrived at Xiangyang.

Walking one day beside the River Yu, he suddenly uttered a great cry, and when his officers asked the reason thereof, he replied, "I remembered that here, only a year ago, I lost my great general, Dian Wei. Is that not a reason to grieve?"

Thereupon, Cao Cao gave orders to halt, while he would make a great sacrifice and mourn for his lost leader. At the ceremony, he himself burned incense and wailed and prostrated himself. The army was much affected by his devotion. After the sacrifices to the lost hero, he sacrificed to the names of his nephew Cao Amin and his eldest son Cao Ang, both of whom had died at the same time. He also sacrificed to his lost soldiers and even to his Dawan steed which had been killed by an arrow.

Next day, Xun Yu wrote to tell Cao Cao that Liu Biao had gone to help Zhang Xiu and was camped at Anzhong, thereby cutting his road of retreat.

Cao Cao replied to the letter, saying, "I have been marching only a short distance each day and, of course, knew of the pursuit. But my plans are laid and, as I am near Anzhong, my enemy will be broken. You need not have any fears."

Then, Cao Cao hastened his march till he came near where Liu Biao had taken position. Zhang Xiu still shortened the distance. Cao Cao ordered

his men during the night to open a secret way through a pass, where he laid an ambush.

With the first light of dawn, Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu met. As Cao Cao's force looked small, they thought he had retired, so they boldly advanced into the pass to smite him. Then the ambush was opened, and both of the attackers' forces were cut up. The fighting ended; Cao Cao's soldiers went outside the pass and encamped.

The two leaders on the other side restored order among their beaten troops and then held a conference.

"How could we have foreseen such a wicked ruse?" said Liu Biao.

"Let us try again," said Zhang Xiu.

Wherefore, they joined forces at Anzhong.

But Xun Yu discovered through his spies that Yuan Shao was preparing an attack on Capital Xuchang, so he at once wrote to Cao Cao, who, much disturbed by this news, set out homeward right away. When Zhang Xiu heard this through his scouts, he wished to follow the retreating army.

Jia Xu opposed it and said, "It will lead to a defeat."

However, Liu Biao said, "It is wrong to lose such a chance."

And so finally, pursuit was decided upon. They had not marched more than four miles before they came upon Cao Cao's rearguard, who fought with great vigor and bravery so that the pursuers were beaten off and went home discomfited.

Zhang Xiu said to Jia Xu, "This defeat comes from my not following your advice."

"Now, set your army in order and pursue," said Jia Xu.

“But we have just suffered defeat!” cried both leaders. “Do you now counsel pursuit?”

“Yes, and the result will be a great victory if you go now. I will venture my head on that,” said Jia Xu.

Zhang Xiu had confidence, but Liu Biao was afraid and would not accompany him. So only one army started in pursuit.

However, this was enough. Cao Cao’s rearguard was thoroughly routed and abandoned their wagons and their baggage in their hasty flight. Zhang Xiu pursued, but suddenly a troop came out from the shelter of some hills and checked him. Fearful to try further, he hastened back to Anzhong.

The other general, Liu Biao, asked the adviser to explain his apparent inconsistency, saying, “When our veteran and brave soldiers were going to pursue those who retreated, you said our men would lose the day, and when defeated men pursued the victors, you foretold victory. You were right in both cases, but we wish you would enlighten us.”

“It is easy to explain. You, Generals, although skilled leaders, are not a match for our enemy. Though Cao Cao had lost a battle, he had able generals to keep the rear and guard against pursuit. Our soldiers are good but not a match for them. That is how I knew. For as much as Cao Cao’s hurried retreat was due to trouble in the capital, and he had beaten off our attack, I knew he would retire at his utmost speed and not take his usual precautions. I ventured to take advantage of his laxity.”

Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu could not but affirm his complete understanding of the conditions. On the advice of Jia Xu, Liu Biao then returned to Jingzhou, while Zhang Xiu took up his position at Xiangyang so that each strengthened the other as the lips protect the teeth from cold.

When Cao Cao, during his retreat, heard that his army was being pursued, he hastily turned back to support the rearguard. Then, he saw the pursuing army draw off.

The soldiers of the beaten rearguard said, "Had it not been for the troops that came out of the hills, we would all have been lost."

"What troops?" asked Cao Cao in surprise.

The leader of the troops then advanced, slung his spear and, dismounting, made a low obeisance. He was Li Tong, Imperial Commander, from Jiangxia.

Cao Cao asked him why he had come.

Li Tong replied, "I was in command at Runan when I heard of the struggle going on, so I came to lend you any help I could."

To show his gratitude, Cao Cao conferred upon Li Tong the title Lord Who Renders High Services, and confirmed him in his command as the defense of Runan against Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu. Then, Li Tong expressed his thanks and took his leave.

On his return to the capital, Cao Cao presented a memorial on the good services rendered by Sun Ce, and the Emperor made him Lord of Wu with the title General Who Destroys Rebels. The messenger bearing the decree bore also the order to repress Liu Biao.

Cao Cao went to his palace and there received the ceremonial calls of congratulation. These finished, Xun Yu asked, "You, Sir, marched very leisurely to Anzhong; how came it that you felt certain of victory?"

Cao Cao replied, "My soldiers, who retire and find their retreat cut off, fight vigorously and desperately. I retired slowly to entice the enemy into following, whereby I could do as I wished with them. Basing my movements on these considerations, I felt secure."

Xun Yu bowed his head in admiration.

When Guo Jia entered, Cao Cao said, "Why so late, Sir?"

The visitor drew a letter from his sleeve, saying to his master, "Yuan Shao sends this expressing he desires to send an army to attack Gongsun Zan and wishes you to lend provisions and troops."

"I heard Yuan Shao was going to attack Xuchang. I suppose my return has made him change his intention," said Cao Cao. Then, he opened the letter and read it. It was couched in very arrogant terms. "Yuan Shao is so exceedingly rude that I will attack him," said the Prime Minister. "Only I think I am not quite strong enough. What should be done?"

Guo Jia said, "My lord, you know well who lost, and why, in the conflict between Liu Bang, the Supreme Ancestor, and Xiang Yu, his rival. The former won only by superior wisdom. Xiang Yu was the stronger, but in the end, he was overcome. Your rival has ten weak points, whereas you have ten strong ones, and though his army is large, it is not terrible."

Then, Guo Jia continued, "Yuan Shao is overmuch devoted to ceremony and deportment, while you are sympathetic and natural: this is an excellence in conduct. He is antagonistic and drives; you are conciliatory and lead, so you have the advantage of popular approval. For many years, the government has been lax, and he makes it more so; you strive vigorously after efficiency: this is the excellence of able administration. He is outwardly liberal but grudging at heart and too given to nepotism; you appear exacting, but you understand and use people after their ability: this is the advantage of correct appreciation. He is a visionary but lacking in decision; you are a man of prompt decision and direct action: this is an advantage in policy. He loves to gather about him people of renown; you treat people as you find them, regardless of their reputation: this is where you excel in moral virtue. He is compassionate to those at hand but careless

about those out of sight; your care is all-embracing: this is where you excel in humanity. He lends a ready ear to calumny and is misled; you may be flooded with evil counsel, but you preserve independence: this is where you excel in perspicacity. His sense of right and wrong is confused; your appreciation is accurate and clear: this is where you excel in administrative capacity. He loves the make-believe force, but is ignorant of military essentials; you would overcome with far inferior numbers, as you possess military genius: this is where you excel in war. With your ten superiorities, you will have no difficulty in overcoming Yuan Shao.”

“How can I be worth as much as you say?” said Cao Cao, smiling.

“What Guo Jia has said about the ten points in your favor agrees exactly with what I think,” said Xun Yu. “Yuan Shao’s army is not formidable in spite of its size.”

“The real and dangerous enemy is Lu Bu,” said Guo Jia. “When Yuan Shao has gone north to destroy Gongsun Zan, we ought to sweep away Lu Bu and so clear away our danger from that side, for if this is not done, our attack on Yuan Shao will be the signal for an attempt on the capital. That would be most serious.”

Cao Cao saw things in the same light as his advisers and began to discuss plans for an attack on Lu Bu. Xun Yu was of the opinion that they should first secure the fidelity and aid of Liu Bei. So letters were written, and they awaited his assurance before moving a soldier.

Then, in order to reassure Yuan Shao, his emissary was treated with great kindness, and a memorial was presented to the Emperor asking extra honors for him. Yuan Shao was made Imperial Protector of the four northern regions—Jizhou, Qingzhou, Youzhou, and Bingzhou. With all this, a private letter was written by Cao Cao, urging upon him to attack Gongsun Zan and promising assistance. So Yuan Shao’s army started.

In the meantime, Chen Deng and Chen Gui were playing their game. At every feast and gathering in Xuzhou, they uttered the most fulsome praises of Lu Bu. Chen Gong was greatly displeased and took an opportunity to talk about them to his master.

“They flatter you to your face, but what is in their hearts? You ought to be most carefully on your guard.”

“Hold your tongue!” was the angry reply. “You are simply slandering them without the slightest excuse. You want to harm good people.”

“No ears for loyal words,” said Chen Gong, as he went away sad at heart, “and we shall suffer.” He thought seriously of abandoning Lu Bu, but that would be too painful a wrench. Beside, he feared people would laugh at him.

So the days passed sorrowfully for Chen Gong. One day, with a few horsemen, he rode out to the country near Xiaopei to hunt. On the high road, he saw a messenger galloping along in hot haste and began to wonder what it might mean. He left the hunt, rode across country, and intercepted the rider.

“Where are you from? Who sent you?” asked Chen Gong.

The messenger made no reply, for he knew to what party his captors belonged. But they searched him and found a letter: the secret reply to Cao Cao’s letter from Liu Bei. The messenger and the letter were both taken straight to Lu Bu.

Lu Bu questioned the man, who said, “The Prime Minister sent me to bear a letter to Imperial Protector Liu Bei. I was now taking back the reply. I know nothing more, and I am ignorant of the contents of the letters.”

So Lu Bu tore it open and read:

“I have received your commands concerning the destruction of Lu Bu, and dare I for a moment venture to disregard them? But my force is weak, and I must act with extreme circumspection. If you move your main body, then I will hasten forward, and in the meantime, my army shall be readied and weapons prepared. I await your command.”

Lu Bu was deeply alarmed. “The wretches!” cried he. “To dare to act thus!”

The unfortunate messenger was put to death and counter-moves planned. Chen Gong and Zang Ba went to enlist the help of the Taishan Mountains bandits—Sun Guan, Wu Dun, Yin Li, and Chang Xi—so that they would take Yanzhou east of the Huashan Mountains. Gao Shun and Zhang Liao went to attack Liu Bei in Xiaopei. Song Xian and Wei Xu went west to attack Runan and Yingchuan. And Lu Bu took command of a large body of troops ready to afford help wherever needed.

The departure of the army under Gao Shun against Xiaopei was reported to Liu Bei, who assembled his officers at a council.

Sun Qian advised sending a message to the capital to inform Cao Cao of their danger. In response to the chief’s call, Jian Yong, a fellow townsman of Liu Bei, offered to take the message. Up to that moment, Jian Yong had served as a secretary. So a letter was written, and Jian Yong set out at once on his journey.

Then, preparations were made for defense: Liu Bei commanding at the south gate; Sun Qian at the north gate; Guan Yu at the west gate; and Zhang Fei at the east gate. Mi Zhu and his brother Mi Fang commanded the family guard in the center.

The two Mis were put in command of the house guard because they were Liu Bei’s brothers-in-law; Liu Bei had taken a sister of Mi Zhu as a

second wife. Hence, they were suitable men to guard the family.

In due course, Gao Shun came to the south gate. Liu Bei ascended the tower and said, "I have no quarrel with your master; why do you come here with an army?"

"You have plotted with Cao Cao to injure my master, as we know now; why should I not bind you?"

So saying, Gao Shun gave the signal to attack. But Liu Bei did not go out to repulse Gao Shun; he only kept the gate fast closed.

Soon after, Zhang Liao led an attack on the west gate, then kept by Guan Yu, who addressed Zhang Liao from the wall.

"You are too good a man to waste yourself on rebels," said Guan Yu.

Zhang Liao hung his head and made no reply. Guan Yu knew that Zhang Liao had a sound heart and high principles and said no more, as he was unwilling to wound Zhang Liao, nor did he go out to attack.

Zhang Liao then drew off and proceeded to the east gate, and Zhang Fei went out to give battle. This was told to Guan Yu, who came over quickly. He saw Zhang Fei going out, but Zhang Liao was already withdrawing. Zhang Fei wished to pursue, but his brother held him back.

"He is afraid and so has gone away. It would be best to pursue," said Zhang Fei.

"No," said Guan Yu. "As a warrior, he is not inferior to either of us, but I have spoken a few straight words, and he has sunk deep. He is repentant, and that is why he will not meet us."

So Zhang Fei understood, and the gates were shut and orders given for careful defense.

When Jian Yong, Liu Bei's messenger, reached the capital, he saw Cao Cao and told him what had happened. The advisers were called to discuss a plan.

Cao Cao said, "I wish to attack Lu Bu. I fear not Yuan Shao, but Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu may attack me in the rear."

Xun You, the nephew of Xun Yu, replied, "Both of these latter have been too recently defeated to do anything so rash. But Lu Bu is a bold fighting man, and if he joined forces with Yuan Shu and they set themselves to conquer the River Huai and River Si, the problem would be difficult."

Then, spoke Guo Jia, "Let us take advantage of the moment before they have fully made up their mind. Smite before they are fully prepared."

And Cao Cao did so. An army of fifty thousand was sent in advance with four commanders—Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Lu Qian, and Li Dian. Cao Cao commanded the Center Army, which marched by divisions, and Jian Yong brought up the rear.

Soon, the scouts informed Gao Shun. He sent speedy messengers to Lu Bu, who detached two hundred horsemen with Hou Cheng, Cao Xing, and He Meng to assist him. Gao Shun posted this reinforcement and his army about ten miles from Xiaopei to meet Cao Cao's army. Lu Bu and the main army also followed close.

When Liu Bei saw the enemy retiring from the city, he knew Cao Cao's army was close at hand. So, making arrangements for guarding the city within, he and his two brothers marched their troops out of the city and made a camp, so that they might be ready to assist.

Now the division of Cao Cao's army under Xiahou Dun, having marched out in advance, first came into touch with Gao Shun. Xiahou Dun

at once rode out with spear set and offered a challenge. It was accepted and the two leaders fought half-a-hundred bouts. Then, Gao Shun began to weaken and had to turn back. He rode round to the rear of his array. Xiahou Dun was not the man to quail, so he followed right into the enemy's territory.

Then Cao Xing, one of Lu Bu's generals, secretly strung his bow, fitted an arrow and, when Xiahou Dun had come quite near, shot at him. The arrow hit Xiahou Dun full in the left eye. He shrieked, and putting up his head, pulled out the arrow and, with it, the eye.

"Essence of my father, blood of my mother, I cannot throw this away!" cried Xiahou Dun, and he put the eye into his mouth and swallowed it.

Then, resuming his firm grip of his spear, Xiahou Dun went after this new enemy. There was no escape for Cao Xing. He was overtaken and fell with a fatal spear wound full in the face. Both sides were stricken dumb with amazement.

Having thus slain the man who had wounded him, Xiahou Dun rode back toward his own side. Gao Shun went in pursuit and, waving on his army, attacked so vigorously that he won the day. Xiahou Yuan defended his elder brother as they fled. Lu Qian and Li Dian led various divisions back to Jibei and made a camp.

Gao Shun, having scored this victory, returned to attack Liu Bei, and as Lu Bu opportunely arrived with Zhang Liao, these three arranged their forces so that each attacked one of the brothers.

Dauntless was Xiahou Dun, that warrior bold,
His courage had been proved of old;

But smitten sore one hapless day,
He might not in the battle stay.

The fate of Liu Bei will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act V

CHAPTER 19

CAO CAO MAKES A FLOOD IN XIAPI; LU BU PERISHES AT THE WHITE GATE TOWER.

As was stated before, Gao Shun and Zhang Liao together went to smite Guan Yu, while Lu Bu attacked Zhang Fei. Both brothers went out to give battle, while Liu Bei's force was held in reserve. But then, Lu Bu suddenly attacked both Guan Yu and Zhang Fei from the rear, and the brothers were forced to flee.

Liu Bei, with a few score of horsemen, rushed back to Xiaopei. As he approached the gate with Lu Bu pressing him close, he shouted to the soldiers on the wall to lower the drawbridge. Lu Bu was so close behind that the archers on the wall feared to shoot, lest they should wound their lord, and so Lu Bu got into the gate. The gate guards could not force him back, so they scattered in all directions. Lu Bu led his force into the city.

Liu Bei saw the position was too desperate for him to reach his residence and he must abandon all his family. So he hastened through the city and left by the west gate, at which he and his scanty following fled for very life.

When Lu Bu reached the residence, he was met by Mi Zhu who said, "The hero does not destroy a person's family. Your rival for the empire is Cao Cao, and my master, always mindful of the good turn you did him at the Archery Feast, would not be ungrateful. But he could not help going to Cao Cao, and I think you will pity him."

Lu Bu replied, "We two are old friends. How could I bear to harm his wives and children?"

Whereupon, he sent the family to Xuzhou with Mi Zhu to take care of them. Next, Lu Bu led his army into the Huashan Mountains to Yanzhou, leaving Gao Shun and Zhang Liao to guard Xiaopei.

During these troubles, Sun Qian had also fled out of the city. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, each with a handful of soldiers, had gotten away to the hills. As Liu Bei, with his few horsemen, was making the best of his way from the scene of his defeat, he heard someone coming up behind him. When he got closer, the person proved to be Sun Qian.

"Alas! I know not the fate of my brothers, whether they be alive or dead, and my wife and children are lost to me! What can I do?" said Liu Bei.

Sun Qian replied, "I see nothing better than getting away to Cao Cao, whence we may be able to plan our future moves."

Liu Bei had no better plan to propose, and the two men directed their way to Xuchang, choosing byroads rather than highways. When their small supplies ran out, they entered a village to beg. But when the people of any place heard that Liu Bei of Yuzhou was the man who needed help, they vied with each other in offering all that was required.

One day, they sought shelter at a house whence a youth came out and made a low obeisance. They asked his name and he gave it as Liu An, of a well known family of hunters. Hearing who the visitor was, the hunter wished to lay before him a dish of game, but though he sought for a long

time, nothing could be found for the table. So Liu An came home, killed his wife, and prepared a portion for his guest.

While eating, Liu Bei asked, "What flesh is it?"

Liu An told him: "Wolf."

Liu Bei knew no better and ate his fill. Next day at daylight, just as Liu Bei was leaving, he went to the stables in the rear to get his horse, and passing through the kitchen, he saw the dead body of a woman lying on the table. The flesh of one arm had been cut away. Quite startled, he asked what this meant, and then he knew what he had eaten the night before. He was deeply sorry at this proof of his host's regard, and the tears rained down as he mounted his steed at the gate.

"I wish I could go with you," said Liu An, "but as my mother still lives, I cannot go so far from home."

Liu Bei thanked him and went his way. The party took the road by Liangcheng, and as they were going out, they saw not far off a thick cloud of dust. When the troop came nearer, they found the troops were of Cao Cao's army, and with them they traveled to the main camp, where they found Cao Cao himself.

Cao Cao shed tears at the sad story of Liu Bei's distress, the loss of the city, his brothers and wives and children. When Liu Bei told him of the hunter who had sacrificed his wife to feed them, Cao Cao sent the hunter a present of a hundred ounces of silver as a reward.

The march then was continued to Jibei, where Xiahou Yuan welcomed them. They heard that his brother Xiahou Dun was still ill from the wound

he had received in the eye. Cao Cao went to the sick man's bedside to see him and had him removed to Xuchang for skilled treatment.

Presently, scouts, sent out particularly for tidings of Lu Bu, returned, saying, "Lu Bu has allied himself with the bandits in the east, and they are attacking Yanzhou."

At this, Cao Cao dispatched Cao Ren with three thousand soldiers to take Xiaopei, while he, in conjunction with Liu Bei, moved against Lu Bu.

They went east. As they reached the Mangdang Hills near Xiao Pass, they met the a band of thirty thousand Taishan Mountains brigands barring their road. The chieftains of the bandits were Sun Guan, Wu Dun, Yin Li, and Chang Xi, who rode out with their spears set. However, Xu Chu plunged into the battle and easily beat them back and chased them right up to the pass.

The scouts told Lu Bu, who was then in Xuzhou, whither he had gone to start an expedition to save Xiaopei. He left the protection of Xuzhou to Chen Gui and set out with Chen Deng.

As Chen Deng was starting, Chen Gui said to him, "Remember the words of Cao Cao, that the business of the east is in our hands. Now is our moment, for Lu Bu is about to suffer defeat."

"Father, I can look after the outside. But when Lu Bu returns beaten, you must arrange with Mi Zhu to keep him out of the city. I shall find a means of escape," said Chen Deng.

"His family is here, and he has many friends. How about them?"

"I also have a scheme to settle them."

Then, Chen Deng went to see Lu Bu, to whom he said, "Xuzhou is surrounded, and this city will be fiercely attacked. We ought to provide for possible retreat, and I advise storing grain and money in Xiapi. We could

retreat there if the day went adversely. Why not see about this in good time?"

"Your words are indeed wise. I will also send my wives and little ones thither," said Lu Bu.

The family left under escort of Wei Xu and Song Xian, and with them was sent much grain and treasures and coins.

And then the soldiers marched to the relief of the pass. About halfway there, Chen Deng said, "Let me go first to reconnoiter so that you, my lord, may advance with confidence."

Thus, Chen Deng parted company with his chief and preceded him to the pass, where he was received by Chen Gong. Chen Deng said, "The General greatly wonders why you do not advance. He is going to inquire into it."

"The enemy is in great force, and we cannot be too careful," said Chen Gong. "We are holding the pass, and you should persuade our master to take steps to guard Xiaopei."

Chen Deng said, "Your words are true."

That evening, he went up to the heights from which he could see Cao Cao's army, which was quite close to the pass. Then, he wrote three notes, tied them to arrows, and shot them into Cao Cao's camp.

Next day, he left and hastened back to Lu Bu and said, "Those bandits are about to give up the pass to the enemy, but I have left Chen Gong to hold it. You had better make an attack tonight and hold him."

"Had it not been for you, the pass would have been lost," said Lu Bu.

Then, he sent Chen Deng back to arrange a fire signal with Chen Gong for simultaneous action.

So Chen Deng returned to Chen Gong, to whom he said, "Cao Cao's troops have found a secret way through the pass, and I fear Xuzhou is already lost. You ought to go back at once."

At this, the pass was abandoned, and Chen Gong began to retreat. Then, Chen Deng gave the prearranged signal.

Lu Bu saw the fire and advanced in the darkness to the relief of the pass. Presently, he met Chen Gong's army, and as neither recognized the other in the darkness, a fierce battle ensued. Nor was the trick discovered till daylight came.

While these things were going on, Cao Cao had noted the signal and advanced as fast as possible. The bandits, who alone remained to hold the pass, were easily driven out and scattered in all directions.

When daylight came and the trick was discovered, Lu Bu and Chen Gong set off together for Xuzhou. But when they arrived and summoned the gate, instead of opening the doors, the guards on the wall saluted them with a thick flight of arrows.

At the same time, Mi Zhu appeared on the defense tower and shouted, "You stole our master's city, and now we are going to give it back to him. You will not enter here again!"

"Where is Chen Gui?" cried Lu Bu, angrily.

"We have slain him!" was the reply.

"Where is Chen Deng?" said Lu Bu, turning to Chen Gong.

"Do you still hold to your delusion, General, that you ask where this specious rogue is?"

Lu Bu bade them search through all the ranks, but Chen Deng was not to be found. Then, they decided to go to Xiaopei. But ere they had gotten

halfway there, suddenly appeared the troops under the command of Gao Shun and Zhang Liao.

They said, "Chen Deng came to us saying you, General, were surrounded and wanted help, so we came at once."

"Another trick of that false rogue!" said Lu Bu. "Surely he shall die for this."

They went with all speed to Xiaopei, only to see as they drew near the ensigns of the enemy displayed all along the walls, for the city had been taken by Cao Ren.

While Lu Bu stood at the foot of the rampart reviling the traitor, Chen Deng himself appeared on the wall and, pointing to Lu Bu, cried, "Did you think that I, a minister of the dynasty, would serve a rebel like you?"

Lu Bu in his wrath was about to make a desperate attack, but suddenly a great noise was heard, and an army came up behind him. It was led by no other than Zhang Fei. Gao Shun went to engage him, but he had no chance of success. Lu Bu then joined in the fray. Then another army appeared, and the leader this time was Cao Cao himself, and his army rushed to the attack. Seeing that he had no hope of victory, Lu Bu went away toward the east, with Cao Cao in pursuit. Lu Bu's army marched till they were worn out.

Then appeared a new force under Guan Yu. Holding his sword ready to strike, Guan Yu called out, "Do not flee, O Lu Bu! Guan Yu is waiting for you."

Lu Bu joined battle. He was flurried and scarcely knew what was happening. And soon, Zhang Fei came up once more. By desperate efforts, Lu Bu and his troops cut an alley through the press and got free. After this they started for Xiapi as fast as they could travel, and Hou Cheng helped to keep the pursuers at bay and welcomed them into the city.

So the two brothers, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, were together again after their separation. Both shed tears of joy as they told each other what they had seen and suffered.

“I was on the Haizhou Road when I heard of you,” said Guan Yu. “I lost no time in starting.”

“And I had been camped in the Mangdang Hills for a long time. It is happiness to be together again.”

So they talked. Then, they marched off together to find their elder brother, and made their salutations with tears. In Liu Bei’s heart, sadness and joy intermingled. Next, they were presented to Cao Cao, and with him, they went into the captured Xuzhou City.

Mi Zhu soon came with the welcome news of the safety of the family. And Chen Gui and Chen Deng came to present their salutations. A grand banquet was prepared for the officers at which Cao Cao presided as host, and Chen Gui and Liu Bei occupied the seats of honor to his right and left. At the close of the banquet, Cao Cao paid the two Chens the highest compliments on their success and rewarded them with the revenues of ten counties beside giving the son the title of General Who Quells the Waves.

Cao Cao was very pleased with his success and at once began to scheme for the taking of Xiapi, the sole place now left to Lu Bu, where he had taken refuge.

Cheng Yu said the course was inadvisable.

“If Lu Bu is pressed too hard, he may get clear by a desperate effort and throw himself into the arms of our especial enemy, Yuan Shu. These two as allies would be difficult to overcome. Rather, send a capable man to guard the South of River Huai, one able to secure you against Lu Bu on one

hand and to hold Yuan Shu on the other. Moreover, the bandits are in the Huashan Mountains and are still our enemies. They must be watched.”

Cao Cao replied, “I can keep the whole of the Huashan Mountains, and I will request Liu Bei to take the south.”

“Could I dare withstand your command?” said Liu Bei.

So forthwith, Liu Bei, leaving Mi Zhu and Jian Yong at Xuzhou, went south, taking in his train Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Sun Qian. And Cao Cao led his army to Xiapi.

Lu Bu felt very secure in his refuge. He had good store of grain, and he had the protection of the River Si, so he sat quiet, satisfied that he could maintain his defense. So he allowed Cao Cao’s army to approach without molestation.

“You ought to attack Cao Cao’s army as they come up, before they have time to make camps and defenses. They will only have a fatigued army to oppose to your fresh troops, and you will certainly defeat them.”

So said Chen Gong, but Lu Bu replied, “I have suffered too many defeats lately to take any risk. Wait till they actually attack, and you will see them floating away on the waters.”

So Lu Bu neglected his confidant’s advice and waited till the enemy had settled into their camp. This done, the attackers advanced against the city.

From the foot of the wall, Cao Cao called to Lu Bu to listen while he spoke. Lu Bu ascended to the wall where he stood.

Cao Cao addressed him, saying, “When I heard that your family and that of Yuan Shu were likely to be united by marriage, I sent an army against you. Yuan Shu was guilty of treason, while you had to your credit on the destruction of Dong Zhuo. For what reason have you sacrificed all your merits to throw in your lot with a rebel? It will be too late to regret when this city shall have fallen. But if you surrender and help me to support the ruling house, you shall not lose your rank.”

Lu Bu replied, “If the Prime Minister will retire, we may be able to discuss the matter.”

But Chen Gong, standing near his master, began to rail at Cao Cao as a rebel and shot an arrow that struck his plumed helmet.

“My oath, but I will slay you at least!” cried Cao Cao, pointing his finger at Chen Gong.

Then, the attack on the walls began.

“They have come from afar and cannot maintain this for long,” said Chen Gong. “General, go out with your cavalry and infantry and take up a position outside, leaving me to maintain the defense with the remainder of our troops. If he engages you, I will come out and strike at his rear ranks; if he attacks the city, you can come to our aid. In ten days their stores will fail, and we can beat them off. This will place them between the ox-horns.”

“The advice seems good,” said Lu Bu.

Lu Bu went back to his palace and prepared his weapons. As it was the depth of winter, he made his army take plenty of wadded clothing to keep them warm. Lady Yan, his wife, heard of it and came to ask whither he was going. He told her of Chen Gong’s plan.

She said, “My lord, you are leaving an undamaged city, abandoning your wife and little ones, and going with a paltry force. Should any

untoward event happen, will your handmaid and her lord ever meet again?"

Lu Bu hesitated and for three days made no move.

Then, Chen Gong came to see him again and said, "The enemy are all round the city; unless you go out soon, you will be quite hemmed in."

"I am thinking it would be better to maintain a stubborn defense," said Lu Bu.

"Our enemies are short of food and have sent for supplies to Xuchang. These will soon arrive, and you should go out with some veterans and intercept the convoy. That loss would be a heavy blow."

Lu Bu agreed and went in to tell his wife the new plan.

She wept, saying, "If you go, do you think Chen Gong and others equal to the defense of the city? Should anything go wrong, you would be very sorry. You abandoned me at Changan, and it was only through the fortunate kindness of Pang Shu that I was hidden from our enemies and rejoined you. Who would have thought you would leave me again? But go, go your way as far as you wish, and do not mind your wife." And she wept bitterly.

Lu Bu very sadly went to take leave of Diao Chan, who said, "You are my lord and my life. You must not be careless and ride out alone."

"You need not fear. With my mighty Trident Halberd and Red Hare, who dare come near me?" He went out. But when he met Chen Gong, he said, "That story about supplies for Cao Cao is all false, one of his many ruses. I am not going to stir."

Chen Gong sighed. He felt all was lost. "We shall die, and no one shall know our burial place," said he.

Thereupon, Lu Bu remained in his own quarters with his ladies, drinking freely to dissipate his sorrows.

Two of his advisers, Xu Si and Wang Kai, went in and proposed, “Yuan Shu in the South of River Huai is very powerful. Why not write to him to renew the marriage alliance? Yuan Shu can hardly refuse to rescue the affianced bride of his son.”

So Lu Bu wrote and bade these two take the letter.

Xu Si said, “You ought to send a strong escort with us to force a way through.”

So Lu Bu told off one thousand troops and two of his generals, Zhang Liao and He Meng, to conduct his messenger beyond the pass. They started that same night at the second watch, Zhang Liao leading and He Meng bringing up the rear. They got out of the city, crept past Liu Bei’s camp, and got beyond the danger zone. Then, half the escort went on, and Zhang Liao led the remainder back toward the city. At the pass, he found Guan Yu waiting. However, at that moment Gao Shun came to his help, and they all returned and reentered the gates.

The two messengers presently reached Shouchun, saw Yuan Shu, and presented the letter.

“How is this?” said Yuan Shu. “Formerly, he slew my messenger and repudiated the marriage. Now he sends to ask for it.”

“It is all due to the vile plans of that monster Cao Cao. If pray you, Illustrious Sir, consider it carefully,” replied Xu Si.

“But if your master were not hemmed in by his enemy and in imminent danger, he would never have thought of renewing this proposal of marriage.”

The messengers said, “You may decide not to help him, but the teeth are cold when the lips are gone. It will not make for your happiness and comfort.”

Said Yuan Shu, “Lu Bu is unreliable. Tell him that I will send soldiers after the girl has arrived here.”

This was final, and the two messengers took leave and headed back to Xiapi.

When the party reached Liu Bei’s camp, Xu Si decided, “We must wait till night falls, and Wang Kai and I will try to get through in the darkness, the escort of He Meng remaining behind to protect our rear.”

They tried that very night, and the two messengers crept across without discovery. But the escort found themselves faced by Zhang Fei. He Meng tried to fight but was captured in the very first bout, and the five hundred troops of his half-company were either killed or they fled.

The prisoner was taken to Liu Bei, who forwarded him to the main camp. There, he told the story of the marriage and the scheme to save the city. Cao Cao was angry and ordered the execution of He Meng at the main gate.

Then, Cao Cao sent orders to each camp to exercise the greatest diligence, with threats of rigorous punishment of the officers of any corps that permitted any communication between the besieged and the outer world.

Every soldier felt mightily afraid.

Liu Bei returned to camp and cautioned his brothers, saying, “We are in the most important place with regard to the South of River Huai, and you must be very careful not to allow any breach of this command.”

Zhang Fei was inclined to grumble, saying, "We have just captured one of the enemy's leaders, and there is no word of praise or reward for us, nothing but new orders and threats. What do you make of that?"

"You are wrong to complain," said Liu Bei. "These are orders of the Commander-in-Chief, and what would happen were there no orders? Do not disobey them, brother." They promised obedience and withdrew.

In the meantime, Xu Si and Wang Kai had gotten back to Lu Bu and told him what Yuan Shu had said, that if the girl came, the soldiers should go.

"But how can she be sent?" said Lu Bu.

Xu Si said, "That is the difficulty. He Meng's capture means that Cao Cao knows the whole plan of getting help from the South of River Huai. I do not see how anyone but you yourself could hope to get through the close siege."

"Suppose we tried, today?" said Lu Bu.

"This is an ill-omened day. You must not try today. Tomorrow is a very lucky day, especially in the evening, for any military action."

Then, Lu Bu ordered Zhang Liao and Gao Shun, "Get ready three thousand troops for the venture, and prepare a light carriage. I will lead the first seventy miles, then you can escort the bride-elect the remainder of the way to her new home."

Next evening, toward the second watch, Lu Bu wrapped up his daughter in soft, wadded garments, bound her about with a mailed coat, and took her on his back. Then, with his mighty Trident Halberd in hand, he mounted Red

Hare and rode at the head of the cavalcade out of the city gate. Zhang Liao and Gao Shun followed.

In this order, they approached Liu Bei's camp. The drums at once beat the alarm, and Guan Yu and Zhang Fei barred the way.

"Stop!" they shouted.

Lu Bu had no desire to fight; all he wished was to get through, so he made for a side-road. Liu Bei came in pursuit, and the two parties engaged. Brave as he might have been, Lu Bu was almost helpless, now that he was hampered by a girl on his shoulders whom he was desperately anxious to preserve from hurt. Beside, other parties came up all shouting and attacking, and he had no alternative but to give up his project and return into the city of Xiapi. He reached his palace very sad at heart. The besiegers returned to camp well pleased that no one had gotten beyond their lines.

Lu Bu found consolation in the wine cup. The siege had gone on for two months, and still the city stood.

Then, they heard that Zhang Yang, Governor of Henei, had been inclined to come to the help of Lu Bu. But one of his subordinates, Yang Chou, had assassinated him and was bringing his head as an offering to Cao Cao, when Yang Chou was himself slain by Kui Gu, one of the Governor's adherents. Kui Gu had then led the force to Daicheng.

In the camp of the besiegers, there now arose much murmuring. Cao Cao sent Shi Huan to intercept and kill Kui Gu.

Then he called a counsel, saying, "Though Zhang Yang, who meant to hurt us, is happily no more, we are yet threatened on the north by Yuan Shao, and on the west, Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu are a menace. Here, we meet with no success against the city of Xiapi. We are for leaving Lu Bu to his fate and returning home. What do you think?"

Among them, Xun You fought against the idea, saying, "You must not act like this. Lu Bu has lost much, and his spirit is broken. The spirit of the leader expresses that of his army, and when the leader fails, his soldiers do not fight. Chen Gong is clever, but nothing is done. With Lu Bu broken and Chen Gong without decision, it only needs a sharp attack, and we shall succeed."

"I have a plan to propose," said Guo Jia, "a plan to overcome the city at once. It is better than two hundred thousand troops."

"I suppose you mean drowning the city using the Rivers Si and Yi," said Xun Yu.

"That is it," said Guo Jia, smiling.

Cao Cao accepted the suggestion with joy and set his troops to cutting the banks of the River Yi and the River Si and moved his army to the high ground, whence they watched the drowning out of Xiapi. Only the east gate remained clear of water.

The besieged soldiers hastened to their leader.

Lu Bu said, "Why should I fear? My good horse can go as well through the water as over the land." And he again returned to the wine cup for consolation, drinking deeply with his wife and concubine.

The continual drinking bouts tolled at last, and Lu Bu began to look dissipated. Seeing himself in a mirror one day, he was startled at the change and said to himself, "I am injuring myself with wine. No more from this day forward!"

He then issued an order that no one should drink wine, under penalty of death.

Now, one of his generals, Hou Cheng, lost fifteen horses, stolen by one of his subordinates, Hou Cao, who intended to resell them to Liu Bei. Hou Cheng found out where the horses were, went out after them, and recovered them after killing Hou Cao. And Hou Cheng's colleagues congratulated him on his success. To celebrate the occasion, Hou Cheng brewed a few barrels of wine to be drunk at the feast.

But thinking his chief might find him at fault, Hou Cheng sent the bottles of wine to Lu Bu's palace with a petition explaining, "By your virtue of warlike renown, I have recovered my horses; as my comrades come with their congratulations, I brew some bottles of wine, first to offer Your Lordship and second to ask your permission to have a little wine at the feast."

Lu Bu took it very angrily, saying, "When I have forbidden all wine, you brew some and begin to give feasts; you are simply defying me!"

Whereupon, he ordered the officer to instant execution. However, Song Xian, Wei Xu, and other officers came in and interceded, and after a time, Lu Bu softened.

"You ought to lose your head for this disobedience. But for the sake of your colleagues, the punishment shall be reduced to a hundred strokes."

They tried to beg him off this, but only succeeded in reducing the number of blows by one half.

When the sentence had been carried out and Hou Cheng was permitted to return home, his colleagues came sadly to console him.

"Had it not been for you, I should have been put to death," said Hou Cheng.

Song Xian replied, "All Lu Bu cares for is his family. There is no pity for anyone else. We are no more than the weeds by the roadside."

Wei Xu said, "The city is besieged; the water is drowning us out. There will not be much more of this, for we may die any day."

"He is a beast, with neither a sense of humanity nor of right. Let us leave him," said Song Xian.

"He is not worth fighting for. The best we could do would be to seize him and hand him over to Cao Cao," said Wei Xu.

"I was punished because I got my horses back again, yet all he trusts in is his own Red Hare," said Hou Cheng. "If you two will betray the gate and seize Lu Bu, I will steal the horse and go out to Cao Cao's camp."

They settled how to carry out the plot, and that very night, Hou Cheng sneaked into the stables and got Red Hare away. He hastened to the east gate, which was opened to let him through. The guard made a pretense of pursuing him...but only a pretense.

Hou Cheng reached the besiegers' camp, presented the horse and told Cao Cao what had been arranged. They would show a white flag and open the gates to his army. Hearing this, Cao Cao had a few notifications written out, which were attached to arrows and shot over the walls. This is one of them:

"Regent Marshal Cao Cao has received a command from the Emperor to destroy Lu Bu. Those who interfere with the operations of his grand army, whatever their rank, shall be put to death in the gate on the day that the city shall be captured. Should anyone capture Lu Bu or bring his head, he shall be well-rewarded. Let all take note of this."

Next day, at daylight, a tremendous hubbub was heard without the city, and Lu Bu, halberd in hand, hastened to the wall to see what it meant. As he went from gate to gate, inspecting the defenses and guards, he censured Wei Xu for letting Hou Cheng escape and get away with his horse.

Lu Bu threatened to punish Wei Xu. But just then, the besiegers began a fierce attack, as the white flag had just appeared, and Lu Bu had to turn all his energies to defense. The assault lasted till noon, when the attacking force drew off for a time.

Lu Bu was taking a rest in the tower and fell asleep in his chair. Song Xian sent away Lu Bu's attendants. When they had gone, he stole Lu Bu's weapon, the Trident Halberd in which he trusted. Then, Song Xian and Wei Xu fell upon Lu Bu together and, before he was well awake, had bound him with cords, trussing him so that he could not move.

Lu Bu shouted for his guards, but they were driven off by the two traitor generals and could not come near. Then, a white flag was shown, and the besiegers again approached the city.

The traitors shouted out, "Lu Bu has been captured alive!" Xiahou Yuan could hardly believe it till they threw down the famous halberd.

The gates were flung open, and the enemy entered the city. Gao Shun and Zhang Liao, who were at the opposite gate, were surrounded and cut off by the water and helpless. They were captured. Chen Gong made a dash to the south gate but was taken by Xu Huang.

Presently, Cao Cao entered and at once gave orders to turn the streams back into their usual courses. He put out proclamations to sooth the people.

Cao Cao and Liu Bei, with Guan Yu and Zhang Fei behind, seated themselves side by side in the White Gate Tower. The captives were brought before them.

Lu Bu looked a pitiable object. Although a very tall man, he was tied up in a veritable ball. "The bonds are very tight," cried he, "and I beseech you to loosen them!"

"Binding a tiger must bind tight, of course," replied Cao Cao.

Seeing Hou Cheng, Song Xian, and Wei Xu standing there, looking pleased at their success, Lu Bu said, "I treated you all well enough; how could you turn against me?"

Said Song Xian, "You listened to the words of your women but rejected the advice of your generals. Was not that mean?" Lu Bu was silent.

Then, Gao Shun was brought forward. "What have you to say?" asked Cao Cao. Gao Shun sulkily held his tongue. He was ordered out to execution.

Next, Chen Gong was led in.

"I hope you have been well since we last saw each other, Chen Gong?" said Cao Cao.

"Your ways were crooked, and so I left you," said Chen Gong.

"You say I was crooked, but what of your serving Lu Bu?"

"Though he was a fool, he did not resemble you in deceit and wickedness."

“You say you are able enough and clever, but what about your position today?”

Turning toward Lu Bu, Chen Gong said, “This man would not follow my advice. Had he done so, he would not now be a captive.”

“What think you ought to be done about this day’s work?” said Cao Cao.

“There is death for me today, and that is the end!” said Chen Gong undauntedly.

“Very well for you, but what of your mother and wife and children?”

“It is said that one who rules with due regard to filial piety does not harm a person’s family; one who would show benevolence does not cut off the sacrifices at a person’s tomb. My mother and wife and children are in your hands. But since I am your prisoner, I pray you slay me quickly and not to try to harrow my feelings.”

Cao Cao’s heart still leaned toward mercy, but Chen Gong turned and walked away, repulsing the attendants who would stop him. Cao Cao rose from his place and walked with Chen Gong, the tears falling from his eyes.

Chen Gong never looked at him.

Turning to his guards, Cao Cao said, “Let his mother and family be taken to Xuchang and looked after immediately. Any postponement will be punished!”

The condemned man heard him but uttered no word. He stretched out his neck for the blow. Tears sprang to the eyes of all present. His remains were honorably coffined and buried in Xuchang.



A poem pitying Chen Gong's fate says:

Neither hope of life nor fear of death moved him.

How brave was he, a hero indeed!

But his lord heeded not his words,

Wherefore in vain possessed he great talents.

Nevertheless, in that he stood by his master.

To parting with wife and mother,

He merits our pity and profound respect.

Who would resemble Chen Gong

That day he died at the White Gate Tower?

While Cao Cao sadly escorted Chen Gong on the way to death, Lu Bu appealed to Liu Bei, "Noble Sir, you sit there an honored guest while poor I lie bound at your feet. Will you not utter one word to alleviate my lot?"

Liu Bei nodded.

As Cao Cao returned to his place, Lu Bu called out, "Your only trouble, Illustrious Sir, is myself, and I am on your side now. You take the lead, I will help you, and together, the world is at our feet."

"What do you think?" said Cao Cao, turning to Liu Bei.

"You are willing to forget the episodes of Ding Yuan and Dong Zhuo?"

"Truly the lout is not to be trusted!" said Lu Bu, looking at Liu Bei.

"Strangle and expose!" ordered Cao Cao.

As he was led away, Lu Bu turned once more to Liu Bei, "You long-eared lout, you forget now the service I rendered you that day at my camp gate, when my arrow hit the mark!"

Just then, someone shouted, “Lu Bu, O fool! Death is but death, so why are you scared of it?” Everyone turned to look: the guards were hustling Zhang Liao to the place of judgment.

Cao Cao ordered Lu Bu’s execution.



A poet has written upon the death of Lu Bu:

The flood spreads wide, the city drowns,
Its lord is captive. Naught avails
His courser’s speed or halberd’s thrust.
The tiger erstwhile fierce, now whines
For mercy. Cao Cao had meted him
Full well, a falcon flown at will
And hungry kept. Poor fool! He let
Chen Gong’s advice be overborne
By harem tattle; vainly now
He rails against the Long-Ears’ faith.

And another poem says:

Round is the hungry tiger, eater of men, for whom is
no pity,
Since the blood of his victims is fresh and not yet dry.
Liu Bei spoke no word in favor of Lu Bu,
To whom even a father’s life was not sacred.

It was recorded earlier that the executioners were hustling Zhang Liao forward.

Pointing to him from above, Cao Cao said, "He has a familiar face."

"You were not likely to forget me: you saw me before in Puyang," said Zhang Liao.

"Oh, so you remember me, eh?"

"Yes. More is the pity."

"Pity for what?"

"That the fire that day was not fierce enough to burn you up, rebel that you are!"

Cao Cao began to get angry. "How dare you insult me?" cried he and lifted his sword to kill the bold speaker.

The undaunted Zhang Liao never changed color but stretched out his neck for the blow. Then, a man behind Cao Cao caught his arm, and in front of him, another dropped on his knees, saying, "O Prime Minister, I pray thee stay thy hand!"

Lu Bu whining was not spared,
Railing Zhang Liao far better fared.

Who was it that saved Zhang Liao? The next chapter will show.



END OF ACT V

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT VI:

A HERO'S AMBITION:

CAO CAO SEIZES POWER

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VI

CHAPTER 20

CAO CAO ORGANIZES A HUNTING EXPEDITION IN XUTIAN; DONG CHENG RECEIVES A SECRET COMMAND IN THE PALACE.

The last chapter said that Cao Cao was checked in his angry attack upon Zhang Liao. They were Liu Bei, who held his arm, and Guan Yu, who knelt before him.

“A man as generous-hearted as he is should be saved,” said Liu Bei.

Guan Yu said, “I know him well as loyal and righteous. I will vouch for him with my own life!”

Cao Cao threw aside his sword and smiled. “I also know Zhang Liao to be loyal and good. I was just testing him,” said he.

Cao Cao loosed the prisoner’s bonds with his own hands, had a change of dress brought in, and clothed him therewith. Then, he was led to a seat of honor.

This kindly treatment sank deep into Zhang Liao’s heart, and he hastened to declare formally that he yielded. And then he was given the rank of Imperial Commander and the title of Lordship.

Zhang Liao was sent on a mission to win over the bandit leader Zang Ba, who hearing what had happened, came forthwith and gave in his submission. He was graciously received, and his former colleagues—Sun Guan, Wu Dun, and Yin Li—also yielded, with the exception of Chang Xi,

who remained obdurate. All these former enemies who came over were kindly treated and given posts of responsibility wherein they might prove the reality of their conversion. Lu Bu's family was sent to the capital.

After the soldiers had been rewarded with feasting, the camp was broken up and the army moved away to Xuchang. As it passed through Xuzhou, the people lined the roads and burned incense in honor of the victors. They also petitioned that Liu Bei should be their protector.

Cao Cao replied, "Liu Bei has rendered great services. You must wait till he has been received in audience and obtained his reward. After that, he shall be sent here."

The people bowed low to the ground to express their thanks. Che Zhou, General of the Flying Cavalry, was given command of Xuzhou for the moment.

After the army had arrived at the capital, rewards were granted to all the officers who had been in the expedition. Liu Bei was retained in the capital, lodging in an annex to the Prime Minister's palace.

Next day, a court was held, and Cao Cao told of the services of Liu Bei, who was presented to Emperor Xian. Dressed in court robes, Liu Bei bowed at the lower end of the audience arena. The Emperor called him to the Hall and asked his ancestry.

Liu Bei replied, "Thy servant is the son of Liu Hong, grandson of Liu Xiong, who was a direct descendant of Prince Sheng of Zhongshan, who was the son of His Majesty the Emperor Jing (reigned BC 157-141)."

The Emperor bade them bring forth the Books of the Genealogies, and therefrom a secretary read:

"Liu Jing the Filial Emperor begot fourteen sons, of whom the seventh was Liu Sheng, Prince of Zhongshan. Sheng begot Liu Zhen,

Lord of Luchang. Zhen begot Liu Ang, Lord of Pei. Ang begot Liu Lu, Lord of Zhang. Lu begot Liu Lian, Lord of Yishui. Lian begot Liu Ying, Lord of Qinyang. Ying begot Liu Jian, Lord of Anguo. Jian begot Liu Ai, Lord of Guangling. Ai begot Liu Xia, Lord of Jiaoshui. Xia begot Liu Shu, Lord of Zuyi. Shu begot Liu Yi, Lord of Qiyang. Yi begot Liu Bi, Lord of Yuanze. Bi begot Liu Da, Lord of Yingchuan. Da begot Liu Buyi, Lord of Fengling. Buyi begot Liu Hui, Lord of Jichuan. Hui begot Liu Xiong, Governor of Zhuo. Xiong begot Liu Hong, who held no office or rank; Liu Bei is his son.”

The Emperor compared this with the registers of the Imperial House and found by them that Liu Bei was his uncle by descent. The Emperor seemed greatly pleased and requested Liu Bei to go into one of the side chambers where he might perform the ceremonial obeisance prescribed for a nephew to his uncle.

In his heart, he rejoiced to have this heroic warrior uncle as a powerful supporter against Cao Cao, who really held all the power in his own hands. The Emperor knew himself to be a mere puppet. He conferred upon his uncle the rank of General of the Left Army and the title of Lord of Yicheng.

When the banquet was concluded, Liu Bei thanked the Emperor and went out of the Palace. And from this time he was very generally styled the “Imperial Uncle.”

When Cao Cao returned to his palace, Xun Yu and his fellow advisers went in to see him.

Xun Yu said, "It is no advantage to you, Illustrious Sir, that the Emperor recognizes Liu Bei as an uncle."

"Liu Bei may be recognized as Uncle, but he is under my orders, since I control the decrees of the Throne. He will be all the more ready to obey. Beside, I will keep him here under the pretense of having him near his sovereign, and he will be entirely in my hands. I have nothing to fear. The man I fear is Yang Biao, who is a relative of the two Yuan brothers. Should Yang Biao conspire with them, he is an enemy within and might do much harm. He will have to be removed."

Hence, Cao Cao sent a secret emissary to say that Imperial Guardian Yang Biao was intriguing with Yuan Shu, and on this charge, Yang Biao was arrested and imprisoned. And his death would have been compassed had his enemy dared.

But just then, the Governor of Beihai, Kong Rong, was at the capital, and he remonstrated with Cao Cao, saying, "Yang Biao comes from a family famed for virtue for at least four generations. You cannot trump up so foolish a charge as that against him."

"It is the wish of His Majesty!" retorted Cao Cao.

"If the child Emperor Cheng of Zhou Dynasty had put Duke Chao to death, could the people have believed Duke Zhou, the Regent Marshal, had nothing to do with it?"

So Cao Cao had to relinquish the attempt, but he took away Yang Biao's offices and banished him to his family estate in the country.

Court Counselor Zhao Yan, an opponent of the Prime Minister, sent up a memorial impeaching Cao Cao for having removed a minister of state from office without a decree. Cao Cao's reply to this was the arrest of Zhao

Yan and his execution, a bold stroke which terrified the bulk of officers and reduced them to silence.

Cheng Yu advised Cao Cao to assume a more definite position. He said, "Illustrious Sir, your prestige grows daily. Why not seize the opportunity to take the position of Chief of the Feudatory Princes?"

"There are still too many supporters of the court," was the reply. "I must be careful. I am going to propose a royal hunt to try to determine the best course to follow."

This expedition being decided upon, they got together fleet horses, famous falcons, and pedigree hounds, and prepared bows and arrows. They mustered a strong force of guards outside the city.

When the Prime Minister proposed the hunting expedition, the Emperor said he feared it was an improper thing to do.

Cao Cao replied, "In ancient times, rulers made four expeditions yearly at each of the four seasons in order to show their strength. They were called Sou, Miao, Xien, and Shou, in the order of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Now that the whole country is in confusion, it would be wise to inaugurate a hunt in order to train the army. I am sure Your Majesty will approve."

So the Emperor, with the full paraphernalia for an imperial hunt, joined the expedition. He rode a saddled horse, carried an inlaid bow, and his quiver was filled with gold-tipped arrows. His chariot followed behind.

Liu Bei and his brothers were in the imperial train, each with his bow and quiver. Each party member wore a breastplate under his outer robe and held his especial weapon, while their escort followed them. Cao Cao rode a dun horse called "Flying-Lightning," and the army was one hundred thousand strong.

The hunt took place in Xutian, and the legions spread out as guards round the hunting arena, which extended over some one hundred square miles. Cao Cao rode evenly with the Emperor, the horses' heads alternating in the lead. The imperial attendants immediately following were all in Cao Cao's confidence. The other officers, civil and military, lagged behind, for they dared not press forward into the midst of Cao Cao's partisans.

One day, the Emperor was riding toward the hunting grounds and noticed his newly-found uncle respectfully standing by the roadside.

"I should like to see my uncle display his hunting skill," said the Emperor.

Liu Bei mounted his steed at once. Just then, a hare started from its form. Liu Bei shot and hit it with the first arrow.

The Emperor, much struck by this display, rode away over a slope. Suddenly, a deer broke out of the thicket. He shot three arrows at it, but all missed.

"You try," said the Emperor, turning to Cao Cao.

"Lend me Your Majesty's bow," Cao Cao replied.

Taking the inlaid bow and the golden-tipped arrows, Cao Cao pulled the bowstring and hit the deer in the shoulder at the first shot. It fell in the grass and could not run.

Now the crowd of officers, seeing the golden-barbed arrow stuck in the wound, concluded at once that the shot was the Emperor's, so they rushed up and shouted "*Wansui!* O Son of Heaven! Live forever!"

Cao Cao rode out pushing past the Emperor and acknowledged the congratulations.

They all turned pale. Guan Yu, who was behind Liu Bei, was especially angry. His silkworm eyebrows stood up fiercely, and his red

phoenix eyes glared as he rode hastily forth, sword in hand, to cut down the audacious Prime Minister for his impertinence.

However, Liu Bei hastily waved him back and shot at him a meaningful glance so that Guan Yu stopped and made no further move.

Liu Bei, bowing toward Cao Cao, said, "Most sincere felicitations! A truly supernatural shot, such as few have achieved!"

"It is only the enormous good fortune of the Son of Heaven!" said Cao Cao with a smile. Then, he turned his steed and felicitated the Emperor. But he did not return the bow; he hung it over his own shoulder instead.

The hunt finished with banqueting; when the entertainment was over, they all returned to the capital, all glad for some repose after the expedition.

Guan Yu was still angry about the Prime Minister's breach of decorum. One day, he said to Liu Bei, "Brother, why did you prevent me from killing that rebel and so ridding the world of a scoundrel? He insults the Emperor and ignores everybody else."

"When you throw stones at a rat, beware of the vase," quoted Liu Bei. "Cao Cao was only a horse's head away from Our Lord, and in the midst of a crowd of his partisans. In that momentary burst of anger, if you had struck and failed, and harm had come to the Emperor, what an awful crime would have been laid to us!"

"If we do not rid the world of him today, a worse evil will come of it," said Guan Yu.

"But be discreet, my brother. Such matters cannot be lightly discussed."

The Emperor returned sadly to his palace. With tears in his eyes, he related what had occurred during the hunt to his consort, Empress Fu.

“Alas for me!” said he. “From the first days of my accession, one vicious minister has succeeded another. I was the victim of Dong Zhuo’s evil machinations. Then followed the rebellion of Li Jue and Guo Si. You and I had to bear sorrows such as no others have borne.

“Then came this Cao Cao as one who would maintain the imperial dignity, but he has seized upon all real authority and does as he wishes. He works continually for his own glorification, and I never see him but my back pricks. These last few days in the hunting field, he went in front of me and acknowledged the cheers of the crowd. He is so extremely rude that I feel sure he has sinister designs against me. Alas, my wife, we know not when our end may come!”

“In a whole court full of nobles who have eaten the bread of Han, is there not one who will save his country?”

Thus spoke the Empress, and at the same moment there stepped in a man who said, “Grieve not, O Imperial Pair! I can find a savior for the country.”

It was none other than the father of the Empress, Fu Wan.

“Have you heard of Cao Cao’s wanton and perverse behavior?” said the Emperor, drying his eyes.

“You mean the deer-shooting? Who did not see that, indeed? But the whole court is full of his clan or his creatures. With the exception of the relatives of your Consort, there is not one loyal enough to deal with a rebel. I have no authority and can do nothing, but there is General Dong Cheng, the State Uncle, who could do it.”

“Could Uncle Dong Cheng come in to consult about this? I know he has had much experience of state troubles.”

Fu Wan replied, “Every one of your attendants is a partisan of Cao Cao, and this sort of thing must be kept most profoundly secret, or the consequence will be most serious.”

“Then what can be done?” said the Emperor.

“The only plan I can think of is to send gifts of a robe and a jade girdle to Dong Cheng, and in the lining of the girdle, hide a secret edict authorizing him to take certain steps. When he gets home and has read the edict, he can elaborate plans as quickly as possible, and neither the spirits above nor the demons below will know anything about them.”

The Emperor approved, and Fu Wan went out. The Emperor then, with his own hand, drew up a decree, writing it with blood drawn by biting his finger. He gave the document to Empress Fu to sew into the purple lining of the girdle. When all was done, he put on the robe and girded it with the girdle. Next, he bade one of the attendants summon State Uncle Dong Cheng to the Palace.

Dong Cheng came, and after the ceremonies were finished, the Emperor said, “A few nights ago, I was talking with the Empress of the terrible days of the rebellion, and we thought of your good services then; therefore, we have called you in to reward you.”

The minister bowed his head in thanks. Then, the Emperor led Dong Cheng out of the Reception Hall to the Temple of Ancestors, and they went to the Gallery of Worthy Ministers, where the Emperor burned incense and performed the usual ceremonies. After this, they went to see the portraits, and among them was one of the founder of the dynasty, Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor.

“Whence sprang our great ancestor, and how did he begin his great achievement?” said the Emperor.

“Your Majesty is pleased to joke with thy servant,” said Dong Cheng, rather startled at the question. “Who does not know the deeds of the Sacred Ancestor? He began life as a minor official in Sishang. There, gripping his sword, he slew a white serpent, the beginning of his struggle for the right. Speedily, he mastered the empire: in three years had destroyed Qin and, in five, also Chu. Thus, he set up a dynasty that shall endure forever!”

“Such heroic forefathers! Such weakling descendants! How sad it is!” said the Emperor.

Pointing to the portraits right and left, he continued, “Are not these two Zhang Liang, Lord of Liu, and Xiao He, Lord of Cuo?”

“Certainly. The Supreme Ancestor was greatly assisted by these two.”

The Emperor glanced right and left. His attendants were rather far away. Then, he whispered to Dong Cheng, “You, like these two, must stand by me.”

“My poor services are of no worth. I do not compare with those men,” said the Uncle.

“I remember that you saved me at the western capital, Changan. I have never forgotten, and I could never reward you properly.”

Then, pointing to his own robe, the Emperor continued, “You must wear this robe of mine, girded with my own girdle, and it will be as though you are always near your Emperor.”

Dong Cheng bowed his gratitude while the Emperor, taking off the robe, presented it to his faithful minister. At the same time, he whispered, “Examine it closely when you get home, and help your Emperor carry out his intention.”

Dong Cheng understood. He put on the robe and the girdle, took leave, and left the chamber.

The news of the audience for Dong Cheng had been taken to the Prime Minister, who at once went to the Palace and arrived as Dong Cheng was passing through the Donghua Gate. They met face to face, and Dong Cheng could in nowise avoid him. Dong Cheng went to the side of the road and made his obeisance.

“Where are you coming from, State Uncle?” asked Cao Cao.

“His Majesty summoned me into the Palace and has given me this robe and beautiful girdle.”

“Why did he give you these?”

“He had not forgotten that I saved his life in the old days.”

“Take it off and let me see it.”

Dong Cheng who knew that a secret decree was hidden away somewhere in the garments was afraid Cao Cao would notice a breach somewhere in the material, so he hesitated and did not obey. But Cao Cao called his guards, and they took off the girdle. Then, Cao Cao looked it over carefully.

“It certainly is a very handsome girdle,” said he. “Now take off the robe and let me look at that.”

Dong Cheng’s heart was melting with fear, but he dared not disobey. So he handed over the robe. Cao Cao took it and held it up against the sun with his own hand and minutely examined every part of it.

When he had done this, he put it on, girded it with the girdle and, turning to his attendants, said, "How is it for length?"

"Beautiful!" they chorused.

Turning to Dong Cheng, he said, "Will you give these to me?"

"My Prince's presents to me I dare not give to another. Let me give you another robe in its stead," said Dong Cheng.

"Is there not some intrigue connected with these presents? I am sure there is," said Cao Cao.

"How could I dare?" said Dong Cheng, trembling. "If you are so set upon it, then I must give it up."

"How could I take away what our Prince has given you? It was all a joke," said the Prime Minister.

Cao Cao returned both robe and girdle, and their owner made the best of his way home.

When night came and he was alone in his library, the State Uncle took out the robe and looked over every inch of it most carefully. He found nothing.

"He gave me a robe and a girdle and bade me look at them carefully. That means there is something to be looked for, but I can find no trace of it. What does it mean?" he soliloquized.

Then, he lifted the girdle and examined that. The jade plates were carved into the semblance of small dragons interlaced among flowers. The lining was of purple silk. All was sewn together most carefully and neatly, and he could find nothing out of the ordinary. He was puzzled. He laid the

belt on the table. Presently, he picked it up and looked at it again. He spent long hours over it, but in vain.

He leaned over on the small table, his head resting on his hands, and was almost asleep, when a candle snuff fell down upon the girdle and burned a hole in the lining. He hastily shook it off, but the mischief was done: a small hole had been burned in the silken lining, and through this, there appeared something white with blood-red marks. He hastily ripped it open and drew out the decree written by the hand of the Emperor himself in characters of blood. It read:

“Of human relationships, that between parents and children stands first. Of the various social ties, that between prince and minister stands highest. Today, Cao Cao, the wicked, is a real tyrant, treating even his Prince with indignity. With the support of his faction and his army, he has destroyed the principles of government. By conferring rewards and inflicting punishments, he has reduced the Emperor to a nonentity. I have grieved over this day and night. I have feared the empire would be ruined.

“You are a high minister of state and my own relative. You must recall the difficulties of the Great Founder’s early days and draw together the loyal and right-minded to destroy this evil faction and restore the prerogatives of the Throne. Such a deed would be indeed an extreme joy to the spirits of my ancestors.

“This decree, written in blood drawn from my own veins, is confided to a noble who is to be most careful not to fail in executing his Emperor’s design.

“Given in the era of Rebuilt Tranquility, fourth year and the third month of spring.” (AD 199)

So ran the decree, and Dong Cheng read it with streaming eyes. There was no sleep for him that night. Early in the morning, he returned to his library and reread it. No plan suggested itself. He laid the decree down on the table and sought in the depths of his mind for some scheme to destroy Cao Cao but could not decide upon any. And he fell asleep leaning over his table.

It happened that Minister Wang Zifu, with whom Dong Cheng was on terms of great intimacy, came to visit him and, as usual, walked into the house unannounced and went straight to the library. His host did not wake, and Wang Zifu noticed, hardly hidden by his sleeve, the Emperor's writing.

Wondering what this might be, Wang Zifu drew it out, read it, and put it in his own sleeve.

Then, he called aloud, “Uncle Dong Cheng, are you not well? Why are you asleep at this time of day?”

Dong Cheng started up and at once missed the decree. He was aghast; he almost fell to the ground.

“So you want to make away with Cao Cao? I shall have to tell him,” said Wang Zifu.

“Then, brother, that is the end of the Hans,” said his host, with tears.

“I was joking,” said Wang Zifu. “My forefathers also served the Hans and ate of their bounty. Am I devoid of loyalty? I would help you, brother, as far as lies in my power.”

“It is well for the country that you think like this,” said Dong Cheng.

“But we ought to have a more private place than this to talk over such plans and pledge ourselves to sacrifice all in the cause of Han.”

Dong Cheng began to feel very satisfied. He produced a roll of white silk and wrote his own name at the top and signed it, and Wang Zifu followed suit.

Then, the visitor said, “General Wu Zilan is one of my best friends. He ought to be allowed to come in.”

Dong Cheng replied, “Of all the officials of the court, Commander Chong Ji and Court Counselor Wu Shi are my best friends. Certainly, they would back me up.” So the discussion proceeded.

Presently, a servant announced no other than the very two men Dong Cheng had just mentioned. “This is providential,” said Dong Cheng, and he told Wang Zifu to hide behind a screen.

The two guests were led into the library, and after the exchange of the ordinary civilities and a cup of tea, Chong Ji referred to the incident at the hunt and the shooting of the stag.

“Were you not angry at that?” said Chong Ji.

Dong Cheng answered, “Though we be angry, what can we do?”

Wu Shi struck in, saying, “I would slay this fellow, I swear, but I cannot get anyone to back me up.”

“One should perish for one’s country; one should not mind,” said Chong Ji.

At this moment, Wang Zifu appeared from behind the screen, saying, “You two want to kill Cao Cao! I shall have to let him know this. And Uncle Dong Cheng is my witness.”

“A loyal minister does not mind death. If we are killed, we will be Han ghosts, which is better than being sycophants of a traitor,” said Chong Ji, angrily.

Dong Cheng said, “We were just saying we wanted to see you two on this matter. Wang Zifu is only joking.”

Then, he drew forth the decree and showed it to the two newcomers, who also wept as they read it. They were asked to add their names to the silk roll.

Wang Zifu said, “Wait here a few moments till I get Wu Zilan to come.” He left the room and very soon returned with his friend, who also wrote his name in the presence of all the others.

After this, they went into one of the inner chambers to drink success to the new plot. While there, a new visitor, Ma Teng, Governor of Xiliang, was announced.

“Say I am indisposed,” said the host, “and cannot receive visitors.”

The doorkeeper took the message, whereat Ma Teng angrily said, “Last night, at Donghua Gate, I saw him come out in robe and girdle. How can he pretend illness today? I do not come from mere idleness; why does he refuse to see me?”

The doorkeeper went in again and told his master what the visitor had said and that he was very angry. Then Dong Cheng rose, excused himself saying he would soon return, and went to receive Ma Teng.

After the visitor had saluted and they were both seated, Ma Teng said, “I have just come from a farewell audience and wished to bid you goodbye. Why did you want to put me off?”

“My poor body was taken suddenly ill. That is why I was not waiting to welcome you,” said Dong Cheng.

“You do not look as if you were ill. Your face wears the very bloom of health,” said Ma Teng bluntly. His host could say no more and was silent. The visitor shook out his sleeves and rose to depart. He sighed deeply as he walked down the steps, saying to himself, “Not one of them is any good. There is no one to save the country.”

This speech sank deeply into Dong Cheng’s heart. He stopped his guest, saying, “Who is no good to save the country? Whom do you mean?”

“That incident at the hunt the other day, the shooting of the stag, filled my breast with anger. But if you, a near relative of the Emperor, can pass your time in wine and idle dalliance without a thought of doing away with rebellion, where can anyone be found who will save the dynasty?”

However, Dong Cheng’s doubts were not set at rest. Pretending great surprise, he replied, “The Prime Minister is of high rank and has the confidence of the court. Why, then, do you utter such things?”

“So you find that wretch Cao Cao a good man, eh?”

“Pray speak lower; there are eyes and ears very near us.”

“The sort of people who covet life and fear death are not those to discuss any great undertaking.” So saying, Ma Teng rose to go away.

By this time, his host’s doubts were set at rest. He felt that Ma Teng was loyal. So Dong Cheng said, “Do not be angry anymore. I will show you something.”

Whereupon, he invited Ma Teng to go into the room where the others were seated and then showed him the decree. As Ma Teng read it, his hair stood on end; he ground his teeth and bit his lips till the blood came.

“When you move, remember the whole force of my army is ready to help,” said Ma Teng.

Dong Cheng introduced him to the other conspirators, and then the pledge was produced, and Ma Teng was told to sign his name. He did so, at the same time smearing the blood as a sign of the oath and saying, "I swear to die rather than betray this pledge!"

Pointing to the five, he said, "We require ten for this business, and we can accomplish our design."

"We cannot get many true and loyal people. One of the wrong sort will spoil all," said Dong Cheng.

Ma Teng told them to bring in the list of officials. He read on till he came to the name Liu, of the imperial clan, when clapping his hands, he cried, "Why not consult him?"

"Whom?" cried they altogether.

Ma Teng very slowly and deliberately spoke his name.

To a very trusty servant comes an Emperor's decree,
And a scion of the ruling house can prove his loyalty.

If readers turn to the next chapter, they will discover about whom Ma Teng talked.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VI

CHAPTER 21

IN A PLUM GARDEN, CAO CAO DISCUSSES HEROES; USING THE HOST'S FORCES, GUAN YU TAKES XUZHOU.

“Who is it?” was the question on the lips of the conspirators.

Ma Teng's reply was, “The Imperial Protector of Yuzhou, Liu Bei. He is here, and we will ask him to help.”

“Though he is an uncle of the Emperor, he is at present a partisan of our enemy, and he will not join,” said Dong Cheng.

“But I saw something at the hunt,” said Ma Teng. “When Cao Cao advanced to acknowledge the congratulations due to the Emperor, Liu Bei's sworn Brother Guan Yu was behind him and grasped his sword as if to cut down Cao Cao. However, Liu Bei signed to him to hold his hand, and Guan Yu did.

“Liu Bei would willingly destroy Cao Cao, only he thinks Cao Cao's teeth and claws are too many. You must ask Liu Bei, and he will surely consent.”

Here, Wu Shi urged caution, saying, “Do not go too fast. Let us consider the matter most carefully.”

They dispersed.

Next day after dark, Dong Cheng went to Liu Bei's lodging, taking with him the decree. As soon as Dong Cheng was announced, Liu Bei came to

greet him and led him into a private room where they could talk freely. The two younger Brothers were there as well.

“It must be something unusually important that has brought Uncle Dong Cheng here tonight,” said Liu Bei.

“If I had ridden forth by daylight, Cao Cao might have suspected something, so I came by night.”

Wine was brought in, and while they were drinking, Dong Cheng said, “Why did you check your Brother the other day at the hunt, when he was going to attack Cao Cao?”

Liu Bei was startled and said, “How did you know?”

“Nobody noticed, but I saw.”

Liu Bei could not prevaricate and said, “It was the presumption of the man that made my Brother so angry. Guan Yu could not help it.”

The visitor covered his face and wept.

“Ah,” said he, “if all the court ministers were like Guan Yu, there would be no sighs for lack of tranquility.”

Now Liu Bei felt that possibly Cao Cao had sent his visitor to try him, so he cautiously replied, “Where are the sighs for lack of tranquility while Cao Cao is at the head of affairs?”

Dong Cheng changed color and rose from his seat. “You, Sir, are a relative of His Majesty, and so I showed you my inmost feelings. Why did you mislead me?”

But Liu Bei said, “Because I feared you might be misleading me, and I wanted to find out.”

At this, Dong Cheng drew out the decree he had received and showed it. His host was deeply moved. Then, Dong Cheng produced the pledge.

There were only six names to it, and these were Dong Cheng, Wang Zifu, Chong Ji, Wu Shi, Wu Zilan, and Ma Teng.

“Since you have a decree like this, I cannot but do my share,” said Liu Bei, and at Dong Cheng’s request, he added his name and signature to the others and handed it back.

“Now, let us but get three more, which will make ten, and we shall be ready to act,” said Dong Cheng.

“But you must move with great caution and not let this get abroad,” said Liu Bei.

The two remained talking till an early hour in the morning, when the visitor left.

Now, in order to put Cao Cao quite off the scent that any plot against him was in progress, Liu Bei began to devote himself to gardening, planting vegetables, and watering them with his own hands. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei ventured to remonstrate with him for taking to such an occupation when great matters needed attention.

“The reason for this you may not know,” replied he. And they said no more.

One day, when the two Brothers were absent, and Liu Bei was busy in his garden, two generals of Cao Cao, Xu Chu and Zhang Liao, with an escort came from Cao Cao, saying, “The command of the Prime Minister is that you come at once.”

“What important affair is afoot?” asked Liu Bei nervously.

“We know nothing. We were ordered to come and request your presence.”

All he could do was to follow.

When Liu Bei arrived, Cao Cao met him and laughingly said, “That is a big business you have in hand at home.”

This remark made Liu Bei turn the color of clay. Cao Cao took him by the hand and led him straight to the private garden, saying, “The growth of vegetables that you are trying to learn is very difficult.”

Liu Bei breathed again. He said, “That is hardly a business. It is only a solace.”

Cao Cao said, “I happened to notice the green plums on the trees today, and suddenly my thoughts went back to a year ago, when we were thrashing Zhang Xiu. We were marching through a parched county, and everyone was suffering from thirst. Suddenly, I lifted my whip, and pointing at something in the distance, I said, ‘Look at those fruitful plum trees in the forest ahead.’ The soldiers heard it, and it made their mouths water. Seeing the plums kindles my appreciation. I owe something to the plums, and we will repay it today. I ordered the servants to heat some wine very hot and sent to invite you to share it.”

Liu Bei was quite composed by this time and no longer suspected any sinister design. He went with his host to a small spring pavilion in a plum garden, where the wine cups were already laid out and green plums filled the dishes. They sat down to a confidential talk and free enjoyment of their wine.

As they drank, the weather gradually changed, clouds gathering and threatening rain. The servants pointed out a mass of cloud hanging in the

sky that looked like a dragon. Both host and guest leaned over the balcony, looking at it.

“Do you understand the evolution of dragons?” asked Cao Cao of the guest.

“Not in detail.”

“A dragon can assume any size, can rise in glory or hide from sight. Bulky, it generates clouds and evolves mist; attenuated, it can scarcely hide a mustard stalk or conceal a shadow. Mounting, it can soar to the empyrean; subsiding, it lurks in the uttermost depths of the ocean.

“This is the mid-spring season, and the dragon chooses this moment for its transformations, like a person realizing his own desires and overrunning the world. The dragon among animals compares with the hero among people. You, General, have traveled all lakes and rivers. You must know who are the heroes of the present day, and I wish you would say who they are.”

“I am just a common dullard. How can I know such things?”

“Do not be so modest,” said Cao Cao.

“Thanks to your kindly protection, I have a post at court. But as to heroes, I really do not know who they are.”

“You may not have looked upon their faces, but you must have heard their names.”

“Yuan Shu of the South of River Huai, with his strong army and abundant resources: is he one?” asked Liu Bei.

His host laughed, “A rotting skeleton in a graveyard. I shall put him out of the way shortly.”

“Well, Yuan Shao, then. The highest offices of state have been held in his family for four generations, and his clients are many in the empire. He is

firmly posted in Jizhou, and he commands the services of many able people. Surely, he is one.”

“A bully but a coward. He is fond of grandiose schemes but is devoid of decision. He makes for great things but grudges the necessary sacrifice. He loses sight of everything else in view of a little present advantage. He is not one.”

“There is Liu Biao of Jingzhou. He is renowned as a man of perfection, whose fame has spread on all sides. Surely, he is a hero.”

“He is a mere semblance, a man of vain reputation. No, not he.”

“Sun Ce is a sturdy sort, the chief of all in the South Land. Is he a hero?”

“He has profited by the reputation of his father, Sun Jian. Sun Ce is not a real hero.”

“What of Liu Zhang of Yizhou?”

“Though he is of the reigning family, he is nothing more than a watchdog. How could you make a hero of him?”

“What about Zhang Xiu, Zhang Lu, Han Sui, and all those leaders?”

Cao Cao clapped his hands and laughed very loudly, saying, “Paltry people like them are not worth mentioning.”

“With these exceptions, I really know none.”

“Heroes are the ones who cherish lofty designs in their bosoms and have plans to achieve them. They have all-embracing schemes, and the whole world is at their mercy.”

“Who is such a person?” said Liu Bei.

Cao Cao pointed his finger first at his guest and then at himself, saying, “The only heroes in the world are you and I.”

Liu Bei gasped, and the spoon and chopsticks rattled to the floor. Now, just at that moment, the storm burst with a tremendous peal of thunder and rush of rain.

Liu Bei stooped down to recover the fallen articles, saying, "What a shock! And it was quite close."

"What! Are you afraid of thunder?" said Cao Cao.

Liu Bei replied, "The Sage One paled at a sudden peal of thunder or fierce gust of wind. Why should one not fear?"

Thus, he glossed over the real fact, that it was the words he had heard that had so startled him.



Constrained to lodge in a tiger's lair,
He played a waiting part,
But when Cao Cao talked of breaking humans,
Then terror gripped his heart.
But he cleverly used the thunder peal
As excuse for turning pale;
O quick to seize occasions thus!
He surely must prevail.

The shower had passed, and there appeared two men rushing through the garden, both armed. In spite of the attendants, they forced their way to the pavilion where sat the two friends. They were Guan Yu and Zhang Fei.

The two Brothers had been outside the city at archery practice when Cao Cao's invitation had come so peremptorily. On their return, they heard that two officers had arrived and led away Liu Bei to the Prime Minister. They hastened to his palace and were told their Brother was with his host in the grounds, and they feared something had happened. So they rushed in.

Now, when they saw their Brother quietly talking with Cao Cao and enjoying a cup of wine, they took up their usual places and meekly stood waiting.

"Why did you come?" said Cao Cao.

"We heard that you, Sir, had invited our Brother to a wine party, and we came to amuse you with a little swordplay," said they.

"This is not a Hongmen Banquet," replied Cao Cao. "What use have we for Xiang Chang and Xiang Ba of old?"

Liu Bei smiled. The host ordered wine to be served to the two "Fan Kuais" to allay their anxiety and, soon after, the three took their leave and returned homeward.

"We were nearly frightened to death," said Guan Yu.

The story of the dropped chopsticks was told. The two asked what their Brother intended by his actions.

"My learning gardening was to convince Cao Cao of my perfect simplicity and the absence of any ambition. But when he suddenly pointed to me as one of the heroes, I was startled, for I thought he had some suspicions. Happily, the thunder at that moment supplied the excuse I wanted."

"Really, you are very clever," said they.

Next day, Cao Cao again invited Liu Bei, and while the two were drinking, Man Chong, who had been dispatched to find out what Yuan Shao was doing, came to present his report.

Man Chong said, "Gongsun Zan has been completely defeated by Yuan Shao."

"Do you know the details? I should like to know how," interrupted Liu Bei.

"They were at war, and Gongsun Zan got the worst of it, so he acted on the defensive, building a high wall about his army and, on that, erecting a high tower, which he called the Yijing Tower. Therein, he placed all his grain, one hundred thousand carts total, and took up his own quarters. His fighting troops passed in and out without ceasing, some going out to give battle, others returning to rest. One of them was surrounded and sent to ask Gongsun Zan to rescue him. Gongsun Zan said, 'If I rescue him, hereafter everyone will want to be helped and will not exert himself.' So Gongsun Zan did not go. This disgusted his soldiers, and many deserted to the enemy so that his army diminished. He sent letters to the capital to crave help, but the messenger was captured. He sent to Zhang Yan to arrange with him for a two-pronged joint attack, and those letters with the plans also fell into Yuan Shao's hands. The plans were adopted by Yuan Shao, who gave the signals agreed upon. Thus, Gongsun Zan fell into an ambush, lost heavily, and retreated into the city. There, he was besieged, and a subterranean passage was pierced into the tower where he lodged. The tower was set on fire, and Gongsun Zan could not escape. So he slew his wife and little ones and hanged himself. The flames destroyed the bodies of the whole family.

"Yuan Shao has added the remnants of the vanquished army to his own and so has become yet stronger. His brother, Yuan Shu, in the South of River Huai, however, has become so arrogant and cruel that the people have

turned against him. Then, Yuan Shu had sent to say he would yield the title of Emperor, which he had assumed, in favor of Yuan Shao. Yuan Shao demanded the Imperial Hereditary Seal also, and Yuan Shu promised to bring it in person. Now, Yuan Shu has abandoned River Huai and is about to move to the North of Yellow River. If he succeeds, the two brothers will control adjoining regions and be dangerous.”

It was a sad story, and Liu Bei remembered with sorrow that, in the days of success and prosperity, the dead chieftain, Gongsun Zan, had piqued his interest and shown him much kindness. Moreover, he was anxious to know the fate of Zhao Yun.

In his heart, he thought, *What better chance am I likely to get for setting myself free?*

So Liu Bei rose and said to Cao Cao, “If Yuan Shu goes over to join his brother, he will surely pass through Xuzhou. I beg you to give me an army with which to smite him on the way. That will finish Yuan Shu.”

“Present a proposal to the Emperor tomorrow, and I will give you an army,” said Cao Cao.

So next day, Liu Bei went to an audience, and Cao Cao gave him command of fifty thousand horse and foot, and sent Generals Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao with him.

When parting with Liu Bei, the Emperor shed tears.

As soon as Liu Bei reached his lodging, he set about making preparations for immediate departure, taking his seal as General and preparing his weapons. Dong Cheng went three miles away from the city to bid him farewell.

“You must not mind my going. This journey will assuredly help on the scheme,” said Liu Bei.

“Keep your mind fixed on that,” said Dong Cheng, “and never forget what His Majesty requires of us.” They parted.

Presently, his Brothers asked him why he was in such a hurry to get away.

Liu Bei replied, “I have been a bird in a cage, a fish in a net. This is like the fish regaining the open sea and the bird soaring into the blue sky. I suffered much from the confinement.”

Then, he ordered Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao to march the troops faster.

Now Guo Jia and Cheng Yu had been absent inspecting stores and supplies when Liu Bei left. As soon as they heard of his expedition, they went in to see their master, asking him why he had let Liu Bei go in command of an army.

“He is going to cut off Yuan Shu,” replied Cao Cao.

“Formerly, when he was Imperial Protector of Yuzhou, we recommended that he be put to death, but you would not hear of it. Now, you have given him an army. You have allowed the dragon to reach the sea, the tiger to return to the mountains. What control will you have in future?”

So spoke Cheng Yu, and Guo Jia followed in the same strain, saying, “Even if you would not put him to death, you need not have let him go. As the proverb says, ‘Relax opposition for one day and age-long harm ensues.’ You must admit the truth of this.”

Cao Cao recognized that these were prudent counsels, so he sent Xu Chu with five hundred horsemen and urgent orders to bring Liu Bei back again.

Liu Bei was marching as rapidly as possible, when he noticed a cloud of dust in the rear and remarked to his Brothers, "Surely they are pursuing us."

He halted and made a stockade, and ordered his Brothers to be in readiness, one on each flank. Presently, the messenger arrived and found himself in the midst of an army ready for battle. Xu Chu dismounted and entered the camp to speak with Liu Bei.

"Sir, on what business have you come?" asked Liu Bei.

"The Prime Minister has sent me to request you to return, as he has further matters to discuss with you."

"When a general has once taken the field, even the royal command is of no effect. I bade farewell to the Emperor, I received the Prime Minister's commands, and there can be nothing further to talk about. You may return forthwith and take that as my reply."

Xu Chu was undecided as to what action to take. He thought, *The Prime Minister cherishes a friendship with Liu Bei, and I have no orders to kill. I can only return with this reply and ask for further instructions.*

So Xu Chu left. When he related what had occurred, Cao Cao still hesitated to take any action.

"This refusal to return means enmity," said Cheng Yu and Guo Jia.

"Still, two of my people are with him," said Cao Cao. "He will not dare do anything unfriendly, I think. Beside, I sent him, and I cannot go back on my own orders."

So Liu Bei was not pursued.



He took his arms, he fed his steed,

And fared forth willingly,
Intent to accomplish his King's behest
Deep graven on his memory.
At least he had broken out of his cage,
He heard not the tiger's roar,
He had shaken the shackles from his feet,
As a dragon on high could soar.

As soon as Ma Teng heard that Liu Bei had set forth, he reported that pressing business called him and marched back to his own region, Xiliang.

When Liu Bei reached Xuzhou, the Deputy Imperial Protector, Che Zhou, came to meet him. When the official banquet was over, Sun Qian and Mi Zhu paid their visit to Che Zhou. Then, Liu Bei proceeded to his residence to greet his family.

Scouts were sent out to see what Yuan Shu was doing. They came back with the intelligence: "Yuan Shu's arrogance had driven away his generals, Lei Bo and Chen Lan, who had returned to their mountain fastness in Mount Song. His forces thus reduced, he wrote resigning the imperial style he had assumed in favor of his brother Yuan Shao, who at once commanded his presence. Thereupon, he packed up the Palace fittings he had made, got the remnants of his army in order, and marched westward."

When Yuan Shu neared Xuzhou, Liu Bei led out his force of fifty thousand soldiers and four generals—Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhu Ling, and Lu Zhao. Yuan Shu sent out Ji Ling to force a way through. But Zhang Fei opposed him and attacked without a parley. In the tenth bout, Zhang Fei cut down Ji Ling. The defeated troops fled in all directions.

Then, Yuan Shu arrived with his own army. Liu Bei placed Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao in command of the left wing, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei the right wing, and himself in the center, and so met Yuan Shu.

As soon as the enemy came near, Liu Bei began to abuse him, crying, “O rebellious one, and wicked, I have a command to destroy you! Yield, then, with good grace and so escape your punishment!”

“Base weaver of mats and mean maker of straw sandals! How dare you make light of me?” replied Yuan Shu, and he gave the signal for an attack.

Liu Bei retired, and his generals from the flanks closed in. They smote the army of Yuan Shu till corpses littered the plain and blood flowed in streams. At the same time, Yuan Shu’s former generals, Lei Bo and Chen Lan from Mount Song, attacked the baggage train and completed the destruction. Yuan Shu tried to retreat to Shouchun, but Lei Bo and Chen Lan barred the road.

Yuan Shu sought refuge in Jiangling, with one thousand troops left of all his army, these being the weakly ones, able neither to fight nor flee. It was then the height of summer, and their food was nearly exhausted. The whole provision consisted of thirty carts of wheat. This was made over to the soldiers, and the members of his household went hungry. Many died of actual starvation. Yuan Shu could not swallow the coarse food that the soldiers lived on. One day, he bade his cook bring him some honeyed water to quench his thirst.

“There is no water, save that tainted with blood,” replied the cook. “Where can I get honeyed water?”

This was the last straw. Yuan Shu sat up on his couch and rolled out on the floor with a loud cry. Blood gushed from his mouth, and thus he died. It was the sixth month of the fourth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 199).



The last days of Han approached and weapons clashed
in every quarter,
The misguided Yuan Shu, lost to all sense of honor,
Forgetful of his forefathers, who had filled the state's
highest offices,
Madly aspired to become himself Emperor,
Resting his outrageous claim on the possession of the
Seal,
And arrogantly boasting that thus he fulfilled the
design of Heaven.
Alas! Sick unto death he vainly begged for a little
honeyed water;
He died, alone.



Yuan Shu being dead, his nephew, Yuan Yin, taking his coffin and his wife and children, sought shelter in Lujiang. There the Magistrate, Xu Liu, slew all the survivors. Among their possessions, Xu Liu found the Imperial Hereditary Seal, which he at once took to the capital and presented to Cao Cao, for which service he was made Governor of Gaoling. Since then, the Imperial Hereditary Seal belonged to Cao Cao.

When Liu Bei heard that Yuan Shu was dead, he prepared a report to the Throne and sent it to Cao Cao. He sent the two generals deputed by Cao

Cao, Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao, back to the capital, keeping the army to defend Xuzhou. He also personally went through the countryside, commanding the people to resume their ordinary avocations.

Cao Cao was angry when his two officers returned without their man and was going to put them to death. Xun Yu reasoned with him.

“The power was in Liu Bei’s hands, and so these two had no alternative,” said Xun Yu.

So they were pardoned.

“You should instruct Che Zhou, the Deputy Imperial Protector, to try to destroy him,” said Xun Yu.

Accordingly, he sent secret orders to Che Zhou, who took Chen Deng into his confidence and asked his advice.

Chen Deng said, “That is easy. Liu Bei is outside the city, and an ambush in the city gate to attack him on his return from the country will be final. I will attack the escort with arrows from the city walls.” Che Zhou agreed to try this.

Then, Chen Deng went to his father to tell him. Chen Gui bade him go and warn the intended victim. Chen Deng at once rode away to do so. Before long, he met Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, to whom he told his story.

Liu Bei was following some distance behind. As soon as Zhang Fei heard of the plot, he wanted to attack the ambush, but Guan Yu proposed another plan.

Said he, “Attacking the ambush will be a failure, since we are without the walls. And I think we can compass the death of Che Zhou. In the night, we will pretend to be some of Cao Cao’s soldiers and entice him out to meet us. We will slay him.”

Zhang Fei approved of the plan. Now the soldiers still had some of Cao Cao's army banners and wore similar armor. About the third watch, they came to the city wall and hailed the gate. Those on guard asked who they were. The men replied that they were Zhang Liao's troops, sent from the capital. This was told to Che Zhou, who sent hastily for Chen Deng to ask his advice.

"If I do not receive them, they will suspect my loyalty," said Che Zhou. "Yet if I go out, I may be victim of a ruse."

So he went up on the wall and said, "It is too dark to distinguish friends from foes. You must wait till daylight."

"If Liu Bei knew of our presence, he would attack," shouted back the soldiers.

And they begged him to let them in. Still, Che Zhou hesitated. They shouted louder than ever to open the gate.

Presently, Che Zhou girded on his armor, placed himself at the head of one thousand cavalry and went out. He galloped over the bridge, shouting, "Where is Zhang Liao?"

Then, lights blazed around, and he recognized Guan Yu with his sword drawn.

"Wretch!" cried Guan Yu. "You would plot to slay my Brother, would you?"

Che Zhou was too frightened to make good defense, and he turned to reenter the gate. But as he reached the drawbridge, Chen Deng shot out flights of arrows, wherefore Che Zhou turned aside and galloped along under the wall. But Guan Yu came quickly in pursuit. His sword was raised aloft, and as it came down, Che Zhou fell to the earth.

Guan Yu cut off his head and returned, shouting, "I have slain the traitor. You others need not fear if you only surrender!"

They threw aside their spears and gave in. As soon as the excitement had calmed, Guan Yu took the head to show Liu Bei and told him the story of the plot.

"But what will Cao Cao think of this?" said Liu Bei. "And he may come."

"If he does, we can meet him," said Guan Yu.

But Liu Bei was grieved beyond measure. When he entered the city, the elders of the people knelt in the road to welcome him. When he reached his residence, he found that Zhang Fei had already exterminated the family of Che Zhou.

Liu Bei said, "We have slain one of Cao Cao's best officers, and how will he stand that?"

"Never mind!" cried Chen Deng. "I have a plan."

Just from grave danger extricated,
A looming war must be placated.

The plan proposed by Chen Deng will be disclosed next.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VI

CHAPTER 22

YUAN SHAO AND CAO CAO BOTH TAKE THE FIELD; GUAN YU AND
ZHANG FEI CAPTURE TWO GENERALS.

This was the plan Chen Deng proposed to Liu Bei: “Yuan Shao is Cao Cao’s terror. He is strongly posted in an extensive territory of four regions—Jizhou, Qingzhou, Youzhou, and Bingzhou—with one million fighting soldiers and numerous able officers. Write letters and pray him rescue you.”

Liu Bei replied, “But we have never had any dealings with each other, and he is unlikely to do such a thing for a person who has just destroyed his brother.”

“There is someone here whose family has been on intimate terms with the Yuans for a hundred years. Yuan Shao would surely come, if he wrote.”

“And who is this?”

“A man you know well and respect greatly. Can you not guess?”

“You surely mean Zheng Xuan,” said Liu Bei suddenly.

“That is he,” said Chen Deng, smiling.

Now Zheng Xuan was a student and a man of great talent, who had long studied under the famed teacher Ma Rong, whose knowledge of the Book of Odes was universally recognized. Whenever Ma Rong lectured, he let fall a curtain behind which was a circle of singing girls. The students were

assembled in front of this curtain. Zheng Xuan attended these lectures for three years and never once let his eyes wander to the curtain.

Naturally, the master admired his pupil. After Zheng Xuan had finished his studies and gone home, Ma Rong praised him to the others, saying, "Only one man has penetrated the inner meaning of my instructions, and that one is Zheng Xuan."

In Zheng Xuan's household, the waiting maids were familiar with the *Book of Odes*. Once, one of the maids opposed Zheng Xuan's wishes, so as punishment she was made to kneel in front of the steps. Another girl made fun of her, quoting from an ode:

"What are you doing there in the mire?"

The kneeling girl capped the verse from another ode, quoted she:

"That was but a simple word I said,
Yet brought it wrath upon my head."

Such was the family in which Zheng Xuan had been born. During the reign of the Emperor Huan, he rose to the rank of Chair of the Secretariat. But when the Ten Eunuchs began to control the government, he gave up office and retired into the country to Xuzhou. Liu Bei had known him before, had consulted him on many occasions, and greatly respected him.

Liu Bei was glad that he had remembered this man, and without loss of time, in company with Chen Deng, he went to Zheng Xuan's house to ask him to draft this letter, which Zheng Xuan generously consented to do.

Sun Qian was entrusted with the task of delivery and set out at once. Yuan Shao read it and considered the matter long before speaking.

“Liu Bei destroyed my brother, and I ought not to help him, but out of consideration for the writer of this letter, I must.”

Thereupon, Yuan Shao assembled his officers to consider an attack upon Cao Cao.

Adviser Tian Feng said, “Do not raise an army. The people are worn out, and the granaries are empty with these constant wars. Let us rather report the recent victory of Gongsun Zan to the Throne. If that does not reach the Emperor, then declare that Cao Cao is hindering the government. Then, raise an army, occupy Liyang, assemble a Yellow River fleet in Henan, prepare weapons, and send out your various divisions, and within three years, you will win all round.”

Adviser Shen Pei replied, “I do not agree. The military genius of our illustrious lord having overcome the hordes of the north, to dispose of Cao Cao is as simple as turning one’s hand. It is not a matter of months.”

Adviser Ju Shou said, “Victory is not always to the many. Cao Cao’s discipline is excellent; his soldiers are brave and well-drilled. He will not sit down quietly, waiting to be surrounded as Gongsun Zan did. Now, you abandon the intention to inform the Throne of our success, which I find a good plan, but you intend to send out an army without any valid excuse. Our lord should not do that.”

Then followed adviser Guo Tu, saying, “You are wrong. No expedition against Cao Cao would lack excuse. But if our master takes the chance now offering itself for coming into his own, he will accede to the request in the letter of Zheng Xuan and ally himself with Liu Bei for the destruction of Cao Cao. This would win the approval of Heaven and the affections of the people: a double blessing.”

Thus, the four advisers differed and wrangled, and Yuan Shao could not decide which to follow.

Then, there came two others, Xu You and Xun Shen, and, seeing them, Yuan Shao said, “You two have wide experience; how would you decide?” The two made their obeisance, and he continued, “A letter from Zheng Xuan the Chair has arrived, counseling me to support Liu Bei in an attack on Cao Cao. Now am I to send an army or not send an army?”

They both cried with one voice, “Send! Your armies are numerous enough and strong enough. You will destroy a traitor and help the dynasty.”

“Your words just express my desire,” said Yuan Shao, and thenceforward, the discussion turned to the expedition.

First, Liu Bei’s legate, Sun Qian, was sent back with Yuan Shao’s consent and instructions for Liu Bei to be ready to cooperate. Second, Yuan Shao assigned Shen Pei and Peng Ji as Commanding Generals; Tian Feng, Xun Shen, and Xu You as Military Advisers; and Yan Liang and Wen Chou as Generals. The army was to be composed of three hundred thousand, cavalry and infantry in equal numbers. They were to march on Liyang.

When the arrangements were complete, Guo Tu went to his chief, saying, “In order to manifest the righteousness of your attack on Cao Cao, it would be well to issue a manifesto with a summary of his various crimes.”

Yuan Shao approved of this, and Chen Lin, well known as a scholar, was entrusted to compose such a document. Chen Lin had been the Court Secretary in the reign of the late Emperor Ling. When Dong Zhuo unseated Regent Marshal He Jin, Chen Lin sought safety in Jizhou. This is the manifesto:

“A perspicacious ruler wisely provides against political vicissitudes; a loyal minister carefully foresees the difficulties in the

assertion of authority. Wherefore, a person of unusual parts precedes an extraordinary situation, and of such a person the achievements will be extraordinary. For indeed, the ordinary person is quite unequal to an extraordinary situation.

“In former days, after having gained ascendancy over a weakling emperor of the powerful Qin Dynasty, Prime Minister Zhao Gao wielded the whole authority of the Throne, overruling the government. All dignity and fortune came through him, and his contemporaries were restrained so that none dared to speak openly. Slowly but surely evolved the tragedy of Wangyi Palace, when the Emperor was slain and the Imperial Tablets perished in the flames. Zhao Gao, the author of these crimes, has ever since been held up to obloquy as the arch example of an evildoer.

“In the later days of Empress Lu of the Hans, after the death of the Supreme Ancestor, the world saw Lu Chan and Lu Lu, brothers of the Empress and fellows in wickedness, monopolizing the powers of government. Within the capital, they commanded two armies, and without they ruled the feudal states of Liang and Zhao. They arbitrarily controlled all state affairs and decided all questions in the council chamber and the court. This dominance of the base and declension of the noble continued till the hearts of the people grew cold within them.

“Thereupon, Zhou Bo, Lord of Jiang, and Liu Zhan, Lord of Zhuxu, asserted their dignity and let loose their wrath. They destroyed the contumacious ministers and restored their ruler to his royal state. Thus, they enabled the kingly way to be reestablished and the glory to

be manifested. Here are two instances where ministers asserted their authority.

“This Cao Cao, now Minister of Works, forsooth, had for ancestor a certain eunuch named Cao Teng, fitting companion of Xu Huan and Zuo Guan. All three were prodigies of wickedness and insatiably avaricious, and let loose on the world, they hindered ethical progress and preyed upon the populace. This Cao Teng begged for and adopted Cao Cao’s father, who, by wholesale bribery, wagons of gold and cartloads of jewels presented at the gates of the influential, contrived to sneak his way into considerable office, where he could subvert authority. Thus, Cao Cao is the depraved bantling of a monstrous excrescence, devoid of all virtue in himself, ferocious and cunning, delighting in disorder and reveling in public calamity.

“Now I, Yuan Shao, a man of war, have mustered my armies and displayed my might that I may sweep away and destroy the evil opponents of government. I have already had to deal with Dong Zhuo, the ruffian who invaded the official circle and wrested the government. At that time, I grasped my sword and beat the drums to restore order in the east. I assembled warriors, selected the best, and took them into my service. In this matter, I came into relations with this Cao Cao and conferred with him to further my scheme. I gave him command of a subordinate force and looked to him to render such petty service as he was equal to. I suffered his stupidities and condoned his shortcomings, his rash attacks and facile retreats, his losses and shameful defeats, his repeated destruction of whole armies. Again and again, I sent him more troops and filled the gaps in his depleted ranks. I even addressed a memorial to the Throne for him to be appointed Imperial Protector of

Yanzhou. I made him feel as he were a tiger. I added to his honors and increased his authority, hoping that eventually he would justify himself by a victory against Dong Zhuo such as Qin used Meng Ming against Jin.

“But Cao Cao availed himself of the opportunity to overstep all bounds, to give free rein to violence and evil. He stripped the common people, outraged the good, and injured the virtuous. Bian Rang, Governor of Jiujiang, was a man of conspicuous talent and of worldwide reputation. He was honest in speech and correct in demeanor. He spoke without flattery. Cao Cao put him to death, his head was exposed, and his family utterly was destroyed. From that day to this, scholars have deeply mourned, and popular resentment has steadily grown. One person raised his arm in anger, and the whole countryside followed him. Whereupon, Cao Cao was smitten at Xuzhou, and his territory was snatched by Lu Bu. He fled eastward without shelter or refuge.

“My policy is a strong trunk and weak branches, a commanding central government and obedient feudal lords. Also, I am no partisan. Therefore, I again raised my banners, donned my armor, and moved forward to attack. My drums rolled for an assault on Lu Bu, and his multitudes incontinently fled. I saved Cao Cao from destruction and restored him to a position of authority. Wherein, I must confess to showing no kindness to the people of Yanzhou, although it was a great matter for Cao Cao.

“Later, it happened that the imperial cortege moved east, and a horde of rebels of Dong Zhuo’s faction rose and attacked. The course

of government was hindered. At that moment, my territory was threatened from the north, and I could not leave it. Wherefore, I sent one of my officers, Xu Xun, to Cao Cao to see to the repair of the dynastic temples and the protection of the youthful sovereign. Thereupon, Cao Cao gave the rein to his own inclinations. He arbitrarily ordered the removal of the court to Xuchang. He brought shame upon the Ruling House and subverted the laws. He engrossed the chairmanship of the three highest offices and monopolized the control of the administration. Offices and rewards were conferred according to his will; punishment was at his word. He glorified whole families of those he loved; he exterminated whole clans of those he hated. Open critics were executed; secret opponents were assassinated. Officials locked their lips; wayfarers only exchanged glances. Chairs of boards recorded levies, and every government official held a sinecure.

“The late Yang Biao, a man who had filled two of the highest offices of state as Chairs of two boards, because of some petty grudge was, though guiltless, charged with a crime. He was beaten and suffered every form of cruelty. This arbitrary and impulsive act was a flagrant disregard of constitutional rules.

“Another victim was the Counselor Zhao Yan. He was faithful in remonstrance, honest in speech, endowed with the highest principles of rectitude. He was listened to at court. His words carried enough weight with the Emperor to cause him to modify his intention and confer reward for outspokenness. Desirous of diverting all power into his own hands and stifle all criticism, Cao Cao presumed to arrest and put to death this censor, in defiance of all legal procedures.

“Another evil deed was the destruction of the tomb of Prince Xiao of Liang, the brother of the late Emperor. His tomb should certainly have been respected, even its mulberries and sweetgum trees, its cypresses and its pines. Cao Cao led soldiers to the cemetery and stood by while it was desecrated, the coffin destroyed and the poor corpse exposed. They stole the gold and jewels of the dead. This deed brought tears to the eyes of the Emperor and rent the hearts of all people. Cao Cao also appointed new offices—Commander Who Opens Grave Mounds and General Who Seeks for Gold—whose tracks were marked by desecrated graves and exhumed bodies. Indeed, while assuming the position of the highest officer of state, he indulged the inclination of a bandit, polluting the empire, oppressing the people, a bane to gods and humans.

“He added to this by setting up minute and vexatious prohibitions so that there were nets and snares spread in every pathway, traps and pitfalls laid in every road. A hand raised was caught in a net, a foot advanced was taken in an entanglement. Wherefore, the people of his regions, Yanzhou and Yuzhou, waxed desperate, and the inhabitants of the metropolis groaned and murmured in anger.

“Read down the names through all the years,
Of ministers that all people curse,
For greed and cruelty and lust,
Than Cao Cao you will not find a worse.

“I have investigated the cases of evil deeds in the regions, but I have been unable to reform him. I have given him repeated opportunities, hoping that he would repent. But he has the heart of a wolf, the nature

of a wild beast. He nourishes evil in his bosom and desires to pull down the pillars of the state, to weaken the House of Han, to destroy the loyal and true, and to stand himself conspicuous as the chiefest of criminals.

“Formerly, when I attacked the north, Gongsun Zan, that obstinate bandit and perverse brave, resisted my might for a year. Before Gongsun Zan could be destroyed, this Cao Cao wrote to him that, under the pretense of assisting my loyal armies, he would covertly lead them to destruction. The plot was discovered through his messengers, and Gongsun Zan also perished. This blunted Cao Cao’s ardor, and his plans failed.

“Now he is camped at the Ao Granaries, with the Yellow River to strengthen his position. Like the mantis in the story, who threatened the chariot with its forelegs, he thinks himself terrible. But with the dignity and prestige of Han to support me, I confront the whole world. I have spearmen by the millions and horsemen by the hundreds of thousands, fierce and vigorous warriors strong as Chong Huang and Wu Huo, those heroes of antiquity. I have enlisted expert archers and strong bowmen. In Bingzhou, my armies have crossed the Taihang Range, and in Qingzhou they have forded the River Ji and the River Ta. They have coasted down the Yellow River to attack his van, and from Jingzhou, the armies of Liu Biao have descended upon Wancheng and Wangye to smite his rearguard. Thunder-like in the weight of their march, tiger-like in the alertness of their advance, they are as flames let loose among light grass, as the blue ocean poured on glowing embers. Is there any hope of his escaping destruction?

“Of the hordes of Cao Cao, those who can fight are from the north or from other camps, and they all desire to return home. They weep whenever they look to the north. The others belong to Yanzhou or Yuzhou, being remnants of the armies of Lu Bu and Zhang Yang. Beaten, stern necessity forced them to accept service, but they take it only as a temporary expedient. They who have been wounded hate each other. If I give the signal to return and send my drums to the mountaintops and wave the white flag to show them they may surrender, they will melt away like dew before the sun, and no blood will be shed. The victory will be mine.

“Now, the Hans are failing and the bonds of empire are relaxed. The sacred dynasty has no supporter, and the ministers are not strong enough to cope with the difficulties. Within the capital, the responsible ministers are crestfallen and helpless. There is no one to rely upon. Such loyal and high principled people as are left are browbeaten by a tyrannical minister. How can they manifest their virtue?

“Cao Cao has surrounded the Palace with seven hundred veterans, the ostensible object being to guard the Emperor, but the covert design being to hold him prisoner. I fear this is but the first step in usurpation, and so I take my part. Now is the time for loyal ministers to sacrifice their lives, the opportunity for officers to perform meritorious deeds. Can I fail to urge you?

“Cao Cao has forged commands to himself to undertake the control of government affairs and, in the name of the state, sends out calls for military assistance. I fear lest distant regions may obey his

behest and send troops to help him, to the detriment of the multitude and their everlasting shame. No wise person will do so.

“The forces of four regions—Bingzhou, Jizhou, Qingzhou, and Youzhou—are moving out simultaneously. When this call reaches Jingzhou, you will see their forces cooperate with those of Liu Biao. All regions and counties ought to organize volunteers and set them along their borders to demonstrate their force and prove their loyal support of the dynasty. Would not this be rendering extraordinary service?

“The rank of lordship, with feudal rights over five thousand households and a money reward of five million, will be the reward for the one who brings the head of Cao Cao. No questions will be asked of those who surrender. I publish abroad this notice of my bounty and the rewards offered that you may realize that the dynasty is in real danger.”

Yuan Shao read this effusion with great joy. He at once ordered copies to be posted everywhere, in towns and cities, at gates, tax stations, ferries, and passes.

Copies found their way to the capital, and one got into Cao Cao's palace. That day, he happened to be in bed with a bad headache. The servants took the paper to the sick man's room. He read it and was frightened from the tips of his hair to the marrow of his very bones. He broke out into a cold perspiration, and his headache vanished.

Cao Cao bounded out of bed and said to Cao Hong, "Who wrote this?"
"They say it is Chen Lin's brush," replied he.

Cao Cao laughed, "They have the literary gift; they would rather have the military, too, to back it up. This fellow may be a very elegant writer, but what if Yuan Shao's fighting capacity falls short?"

Cao Cao called his advisers together to consider the next move.

Kong Rong heard of the summons and went to Cao Cao, saying, "You should not fight with Yuan Shao; he is too strong. Make peace."

Xun Yu said, "He is despicable. Do not make peace."

Kong Rong replied, "His land is wide and his people strong. He has many skillful strategists like Guo Tu, Xu You, Peng Ji, and Shen Pei; loyal leaders like Tian Feng and Ju Shou; formidable generals like Yan Liang and Wen Chou; and able commanders like Gao Lan, Zhang He, Han Meng, and Chunyu Qiong. You cannot say he is despicable."

Xun Yu laughed, saying, "His army is a rabble. One general, Tian Feng, is bold but treacherous; another, Xu You, is greedy and ignorant; Shen Pei is devoted but stupid; Peng Ji is steady but useless. And these four of such different temperaments, mutually incompatible, make for confusion rather than efficiency. The brave Yan Liang and Wen Chou are worthless and can be disposed of in the first battle; and the others such as Gao Lan, Zhang He, Han Meng, and Chunyu Qiong are poor, rough stuff. What is the use even of their hundred thousands?"

Kong Rong was silent, and Cao Cao smiled.

"They are even as Xun Yu describes," said Cao Cao.

Then, Cao Cao issued orders. Generals Liu Dai and Wang Zhong were to lead an army of fifty thousand troops, displaying the Prime Minister's banners, and march against Xuzhou to attack Liu Bei.

This Liu Dai had been Imperial Protector of Yanzhou but had surrendered to Cao Cao and entered Cao Cao's service after the fall of his region. Cao Cao had given him a rank as Supernumerary Leader and now was disposed to make use of him.

Cao Cao himself took command of a large army of two hundred thousand troops for a simultaneous attack on Yuan Shao at Liyang.

Adviser Cheng Yu said, "The two sent against Liu Bei, Liu Dai and Wang Zhong, are unequal to their task."

"I know," said Cao Cao. "They are not meant to fight Liu Bei. It is merely a feint. They have orders not to make any real attack till I have overcome Yuan Shao. Then Liu Bei will be next."

Liu Dai and Wang Zhong went on their way, and Cao Cao marched out his grand army, which came into contact with the enemy, then thirty miles distant, at Liyang. Both sides made fortified camps and waited, watching each other. This went on for two months of the autumn.

There was dissension in Yuan Shao's camp. Xu You was at enmity with his colleague, Shen Pei, who was in commanding position, and the strategist Ju Shou resented the rejection of his plan. So they would not attack. Yuan Shao also could not make up his mind.

Tired of this state of inaction, Cao Cao then gave orders to his commanders: Zang Ba was to continue the pressure on Qingzhou and Xuzhou, Yu Jin and Li Dian to deploy troops along the Yellow River, and Cao Ren to quarter the main force at Guandu. Then, Cao Cao marched with an army back to Capital Xuchang.

The five legions sent against Liu Bei went into camp thirty-five miles from Xuzhou. The camp made an imposing display of the banners of the Prime Minister, but no attacks followed. Their spies were very busy north of the river to get news of Cao Cao's movement. On the defensive side, Liu Bei, as he was uncertain of the strength of the force against him, dared not move.

Suddenly, orders came for Cao Cao's army to attack, and then discord showed itself.

Liu Dai said, "The Prime Minister orders an attack. You advance."

Wang Zhong replied, "You were named first."

"I am the Commander-in-Chief. It is not my place to go first."

"I will go with you in joint command," said Wang Zhong.

"Let us cast lots, and he upon whom the lot falls must go," said Liu Dai.

They drew lots, and it fell to Wang Zhong, who advanced toward Xuzhou with half the force.

When Liu Bei heard of the threatened attack, he called Chen Deng to consult.

Liu Bei said, "There is dissension in Yuan Shao's camp at Liyang, so they do not advance. We do not know where Cao Cao is, but his own banner is not displayed in his Liyang camp. Why, then, is it shown here?"

Chen Deng replied, "His tricks take a hundred forms. It must be that he regards the north as more important and has gone there to look after its

defense. He dares not show his flag there, and I feel sure it is only meant to mislead us. He is not here.”

Liu Bei then asked whether one of his brothers would find out the truth, and Zhang Fei volunteered to go.

“I fear you are unsuited for this,” said Liu Bei. “You are too impetuous.”

“If Cao Cao is there, I will haul him over here,” said Zhang Fei.

“Let me go first and find out,” said Guan Yu.

“If you go, I shall feel more at ease,” said Liu Bei.

So Guan Yu set out with three thousand soldiers to reconnoiter. It was then early winter, and snow was falling from a gloomy sky. They marched regardless of the snow and came near Wang Zhong’s camp with arms all ready to attack. Guan Yu summoned Wang Zhong to a parley.

“The Prime Minister is here. Why do you not surrender?” said Wang Zhong.

“Beg him to come to the front, for I would speak with him,” replied Guan Yu.

“Is he likely to come out to see such as you?” said Wang Zhong.

Guan Yu angrily dashed forward, and Wang Zhong set his spear to meet him. Guan Yu rode till he came close to his antagonist, then suddenly wheeled away. Wang Zhong went after him and followed up a slope. Just as they passed the crest, Guan Yu suddenly wheeled round again, shouted, and came on flourishing his mighty sword. Wang Zhong could not withstand this and fled. But Guan Yu, switching the huge sword to his left hand, with his right laid hold of his victim by the straps of his breastplate, lifted him out of the saddle, and rode away to his own lines with the captive laid across the pommel of his saddle. Wang Zhong’s army scattered.

The captive was sent to Xuzhou, where he was summoned into the presence of Liu Bei.

“Who are you? What office do you hold? How dare you falsely display the ensigns of the Prime Minister?” said Liu Bei.

“What do you mean by ‘falsely’ when I simply obeyed my orders?” said Wang Zhong. “My master wanted to produce the impression that he was present. Really he was not there.”

Liu Bei treated him kindly, giving him food and clothing, but put him in prison till his colleague could be captured.

Guan Yu said to Liu Bei, “I knew you had peaceful intentions in your mind; therefore, I captured Wang Zhong instead of slaying him.”

“I was afraid of Zhang Fei’s hasty and impulsive temper,” said Liu Bei. “He would have slain this man, so I could not send him. There is no advantage in killing people of this sort, and while alive, they are often useful in amicable settlements.”

Here, Zhang Fei said, “You have this Wang Zhong; now, I will go and get the other man.”

“Be careful,” said Liu Bei. “Liu Dai was once Imperial Protector of Yanzhou, and he was one of the nobles who met at Tiger Trap Pass to destroy Dong Zhuo. He is not to be despised.”

“I do not think him worth talking about so much. I will bring him in alive just as Second Brother did this other.”

“I fear that if his life be lost, it may upset our designs,” said Liu Bei.

“If I kill him, I will forfeit my own life,” said Zhang Fei.

So he was given three thousand soldiers and went off quickly.

The capture of his colleague made Liu Dai careful. He strengthened his defenses and kept behind them. He took no notice of the daily

challenges and continual insults which began with Zhang Fei's arrival.

After some days, Zhang Fei evolved a ruse. He issued orders to prepare to rush the enemy's camp at night, but he himself spent the day drinking. Pretending to be very intoxicated, he held a court-martial, and one soldier was severely flogged for a breach of discipline.

The man was left bound in the midst of the camp, Zhang Fei saying, "Wait till I am ready to start tonight: you shall be sacrificed to the flag."

At the same time, he gave secret orders to the custodians to let the man escape. The man found his opportunity, crept out of camp, and went over to the enemy, to whom he betrayed the plan of a night attack. As the man bore signs of savage punishment, Liu Dai was all the more disposed to credit his desertion and tale. So Liu Dai made his arrangements, putting the greater part of his troops in ambush outside his camp so that it was empty.

That night, having divided his army into three parties, Zhang Fei went to attack the camp. A few men were ordered to advance directly, dash in and set fire going. Two larger bodies of troops were to go round to the rear of the camp and attack when they saw the fire well started. At the third watch, Zhang Fei, with his veterans, went to cut off Liu Dai's road to the rear.

The thirty men told off to start a conflagration made their way into the camp and were successful. When the flames arose, the ambushing troops rushed out but only to find themselves attacked on both sides. This confused them, and as they knew nothing of the number of their assailants, they were panic-stricken and scattered.

Liu Dai, with a company of footmen got clear of the fight and fled, but he went straight toward Zhang Fei. Escape was impossible, and the two men rode up each to attack the other. Zhang Fei captured his opponent, and the men surrendered. Zhang Fei sent news of this success to his brothers.

Liu Bei said, "Hitherto, Zhang Fei has been rather violent, but this time he has acted wisely, and I am very pleased."

They rode out to welcome Zhang Fei.

"You said I was too rough. How now?" said Zhang Fei to his Brothers.

"If I had not put you on your mettle, you would not have evolved this stratagem," said Liu Bei.

Zhang Fei laughed. Then appeared the captive Liu Dai, in bonds.

Liu Bei at once dismounted and loosed the cords, saying, "My young brother was rather hasty, but you must pardon him."

So Liu Dai was freed. He was taken into the city, his colleague was released, and both were cared for.

Liu Bei said to them, "I could not help putting Deputy Imperial Protector Che Zhou to death when he tried to kill me, but Cao Cao took it as disaffection and sent you two generals to punish me. I have received much kindness from him and certainly would not show ingratitude by killing you. I wish you to speak for me and explain when you get back."

"We are deeply grateful that you spare our lives, and we will certainly do so in gratitude for what our wives and children owe you."

Next day, the two leaders and their army were allowed to depart unscathed. But before they had gotten three miles from the boundary, they heard a mighty shouting, and there appeared Zhang Fei barring the road.

"My brother made a mistake in letting you go. He did not understand. How could he give freedom to two rebels?"

This made the two men quake with fear, but as the fierce-eyed warrior with uplifted sword was bearing down upon them, they heard another man galloping up and shouting, "Do not behave so disgracefully!" The newcomer was Guan Yu, and his appearance relieved the unhappy men of

all fear. “Why do you stop them since our brother set them free?” cried Guan Yu.

“If they are let go today, they will surely come back,” cried Zhang Fei.

“Wait till they do, then you may kill them,” replied Guan Yu.

The two leaders with one voice cried, “Even if the Prime Minister slay our whole clans, we would never come again. We pray you pardon us.”

Said Zhang Fei, “If Cao Cao himself had come, I would have slain him. Not a breastplate should have gone back. But for this time, I leave you your heads.”

Clapping their hands to their heads, the two men scuttled off, while the two Brothers returned to the city.

“Cao Cao will certainly come,” said Guan Yu and Zhang Fei.

Sun Qian said, “This is not a city that can hold out for long. We should send part of our forces to Xiaopei and guard Xiapi as a cornerstone of our position.”

Liu Bei agreed and told off Guan Yu to guard Xiapi whither he also sent his two wives, Lady Gan and Lady Mi. The former was a native of Xiapi; the latter was Mi Zhu’s younger sister.

Sun Qian, Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, and Mi Fang were left to defend Xuzhou, and Liu Bei went with Zhang Fei to Xiaopei.

The two released leaders, Liu Dai and Wang Zhong, hastened home to Cao Cao and explained to him that Liu Bei was not disaffected.

But their master was exceedingly angry with them, crying, “You shameful traitors, what use are you?”

He roared to the guards to take them away to instant execution.



How can a hare or a deer expect
To conquer a tiger in strife?
Minnows and shrimps that with dragons contend
Already have done with life.

The fate of the two leaders will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VI

CHAPTER 23

MI HENG SLIPS HIS GARMENT AND RAILS AT TRAITORS; JI PING
PLEDGES TO KILL THE PRIME MINISTER.

At the close of the last chapter the two unsuccessful leaders, Liu Dai and Wang Zhong, were in danger of death.

However, Kong Rong remonstrated with Cao Cao, saying, "You knew these two were no match for Liu Bei, and if you put them to death because they failed, you will lose the hearts of your people."

Wherefore, the death sentence was not executed, but they were deprived of rank and status.

Cao Cao next proposed to lead an army himself to attack Liu Bei, but Kong Rong advised, "The weather is too inclement. We must wait the return of spring. In the interval, we better use the time to arrange peace with Zhang Xiu and Liu Biao, before launching an expedition against Xuzhou."

Wherefore Liu Ye was sent to Zhang Xiu and in due time reached Xiangyang. He first had an interview with Jia Xu, Zhang Xiu's adviser, whereat he dwelt upon Cao Cao's virtues so that Jia Xu was impressed. Jia Xu kept Liu Ye as a guest and undertook to smooth his way.

Soon after, Liu Ye saw Zhang Xiu and spoke of the advantages of coming to terms with Cao Cao. While the discussion was in progress, a messenger from Yuan Shao was announced, and he was called in. He

presented letters, and when they also proposed terms of peace, Jia Xu asked what their success had been lately against Cao Cao.

“The war has ceased for the moment on account of the winter,” replied the messenger. “As you, General, and Liu Biao are both well-reputed officers of the state, I have been sent to request your help.”

Jia Xu laughed, “You can return to your master and say that as he could not brook rivalry with his brother, he certainly would be sorely put to it with that of all the officers of the state.”

The letter was torn into fragments before the messenger’s face, and he was angrily bidden be gone.

“But his master, Yuan Shao, is stronger than Cao Cao,” protested Zhang Xiu. “You have torn up his letter and are dismissing his man. What shall we say about such an insult should Yuan Shao come?”

“Better join hands with Cao Cao,” said Jia Xu.

“But there is still between us an unavenged enmity. We could not suffer each other.”

Jia Xu said, “There are three advantages in joining hands with Cao Cao. First, he has a command from the Emperor to restore peace. Second, as Yuan Shao is so strong, our little help to him will be despised, while we shall loom large and be well-treated by Cao Cao. Third, Cao Cao is going to be Chief of the Feudal Lords, and he will ignore all private feuds in order to show his magnanimity to all the world. I hope, General, you will see these things clearly and hesitate no longer.”

Zhang Xiu, now convinced, became more reasonable and recalled Liu Ye, who, at the interview, extolled the many virtues of his master. “If the Prime Minister had any thought of the old quarrel, he would hardly have sent me to make friendly engagements, would he?” said Liu Ye at last.

So Zhang Xiu and his adviser proceeded to the capital, where formal submission was made. At the interview, Zhang Xiu bowed low at the steps, but Cao Cao, hastening forward, took him by the hand and raised him, saying, "Forget that little fault of mine, I pray you, General!"

Zhang Xiu received the title of General Who Possesses Prowess, and Jia Xu was appointed Counselor.

Cao Cao then directed his secretaries to draft letters inviting the support of Liu Biao.

Jia Xu said, "Liu Biao loves to have to do with famous people. If some famous scholar were sent to him, he would submit forthwith."

So Cao Cao inquired of Xun You who was the best person to go as a messenger, and he recommended Kong Rong. Cao Cao agreed and sent Xun You to speak with this officer.

Xun You went to Kong Rong, saying, "A scholar of reputation is required to aid as a messenger of state. Can you undertake this task?"

Kong Rong replied, "I have a certain friend, Mi Heng, whose talents are ten times mine. He ought to be constantly at the court of the Emperor and not merely be sent as a state messenger. I will recommend him to the Emperor."

So Kong Rong wrote the following memorial:

"In ancient days, when the great waters were abroad, the Emperor pondered over their regulation and he sought out people of talent from all directions. In old times, when Emperor Wu of the Hans desired to enlarge his borders, crowds of scholars responded to his call.

"Intelligent and holy, Your Majesty ascended the throne. You have fallen upon evil days, but have been diligent, modest, and

untiring in your efforts. Now, the great mountains have sent forth spirits, and people of genius appear.

“I, your humble servant, know of a certain simple scholar, Mi Heng by name, of Pingyuan, a young man of twenty-four. His moral character is excellent, his talents eminent. As a youth, he took a high place in study and penetrated the most secret arcane of learning. What he glanced at, he could repeat; what he heard once, he never forgot. He is naturally high-principled, and his thoughts are divine. Sang Hongyang’s mental calculations and Zhang Anshi’s memorial feats, compared with Mi Heng’s powers, are no longer wonderful. Loyal, sincere, correct, and straightforward, his ambition is unsullied. He regards the good with trembling respect; he detests the evil with uncompromising hatred. Ren Zuo in unflinching candor, Shi Yu in severe rectitude, never surpassed him.

“Hundreds of hawks are not worth one osprey. If Mi Heng be given a court appointment, notable results must follow. Ready in debate, rapid in utterance, his overwhelming intelligence wells up in profusion. In the solution of doubts and the unraveling of difficulties, he has no peer.

“In former days of Han, Jia Yi begged to be sent on trial to a vassal state for the control of the Xiongnu tribespeople; Zhong Jun offered to bring back the Prince of Nanyue to pay homage to the Emperor. The generous conduct of these youths has been much admired.

“In our day Lu Cui and Yan Xiang, remarkable for their talents, have been appointed among the secretaries. And Mi Heng is no less

capable. Should he be received, then all possibilities may be realized: the dragon may curvet through the celestial streets and soar along the Milky Way; fame would extend to the poles of the universe and hang in the firmament with rainbow glory. He would be the glory of all the present Ministers and enhance the majesty of the Palace itself. The Music will acquire new beauty, and the Palace will contain an excellent treasure. People like Mi Heng are but few. As in the recitation of 'Ji Chu Songs' and the singing of 'Yang E Poems', the most skillful performers are sought and such fleet horses as 'Fei Tu Broncos' and 'Yao Niao Mustangs' were looked for by the famous judges of horses, Wang Liang and Bo Le.

“So I, the humble one, dare not conceal this man. Your Majesty is careful in the selection of servants and should try him. Let him be summoned as he is, simply clad in his serge dress; should he not appear worthy, then may I be punished for the fault of deception.”

The Emperor read the memorial and passed it to his Prime Minister, who duly summoned Mi Heng. He came, but after his formal salutations were over, he was left standing and not invited to sit down.

Looking up to heaven, Mi Heng sighed deeply, saying, “Wide as is the universe, it cannot produce the person.”

“Under my orders are scores of people whom the world call heroes. What do you mean by saying ‘there is not the person,’” said Cao Cao.

“I should be glad to hear who they are,” said Mi Heng.

“Xun Yu, Xun You, Guo Jia, and Cheng Yu are all people of profound skill and long views, superior to Xiao He and Chen Ping. Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Li Dian, and Yue Jin are bravest of the brave, better than Cen Peng and Ma Wu. Lu Qian and Man Chong are my secretaries, Yu Jin and Xu Huang are my van leaders, Xiahou Dun is one of the world’s marvels, and Cao Ren is the most successful leader of the age. Now say you, ‘there are not the people?’”

“Sir, you are quite mistaken,” said Mi Heng with a smile. “I know all these things you call people. Xun Yu is qualified to pose at a funeral or ask after a sick man, Xun You is fit to be a tomb guardian, Cheng Yu might be sent to shut doors and bolt windows, and Guo Jia is a reciter of poems; Zhang Liao might beat drums and clang gongs, Xu Chu might lead cattle to pasture, Yue Jin would make a fair reader of elegy, Li Dian could carry dispatches and notices, Lu Qian would be a fair armorer, Man Chong could be sent to drink wine and eat brewers’ grains, Yu Jin might be of use to carry planks and build walls, Xu Huang might be employed to kill pigs and slay dogs, Xiahou Dun should be styled ‘Whole Body General,’ and Cao Ren should be called ‘Money-Grubbing Governor.’ As for the remainder, they are mere clothes shelves, rice sacks, wine vases, flesh bags.”

“And what special gifts have you?” said Cao Cao angrily.

“I know everything in heaven above and the earth beneath. I am conversant with the Three Religions and the Nine Systems of Philosophy. I could make my prince the rival of Kings Yao and Shun, and I myself could compare in virtue with Confucius and Mencius. Can I discuss on even terms with common people?”

Now Zhang Liao was present, and he raised his sword to strike down the impudent visitor who spoke thus to his master, but Cao Cao said, “I

want another drummer boy to play on occasions of congratulation in the court. I will confer this office upon you.”

Instead of indignantly declining this, Mi Heng accepted the position and went out.

“He spoke very impertinently,” said Zhang Liao. “Why did you not put him to death?”

“He has something of a reputation: empty, but people have heard of him and so, if I put him to death, they would say I was intolerant. As he thinks he has ability, I have made him a drummer to mortify him.”

Soon after, Cao Cao instituted a banquet in the capital at which the guests were many. The drums were to be played, and the old drummers were ordered to wear new clothes. But the new drummer, Mi Heng, took his place with the other musicians clad in old and worn garments. The piece chosen was the “Tolling of Yuyang,” and from the earliest taps on the drum the effect was exquisite, profound as the notes from metal and stone. The performance stirred deeply the emotions of every guest; some even shed tears.

Seeing all eyes turned on the shabby performer, the attendants said, “Why did you not put on your new uniform?”

Mi Heng turned to them, slipped off his frayed and torn robe and stood there in full view, naked as he was born. The assembled guests covered their faces. Then, the drummer composedly drew on his nether garments.

“Why do you behave so rudely at court?” said Cao Cao.

“To flout one’s prince and insult one’s superiors is the real rudeness,” cried Mi Heng. “I bare my natural body as an emblem of my purity.”

“So you are pure! And who is foul?”

“You do not distinguish between the wise and the foolish, which is to have foul vision. You have never read the Odes or the Histories, which is to have foul speech. You are deaf to honest words, which is to have foul ears. You are unable to reconcile antiquity with today, which is to be foul without. You cannot tolerate the vassals, which is to be foul within. You harbor thoughts of rebellion, which is to have a foul heart. I am one of the most famous scholars in the empire, and you make me a drummer boy; that is as Yang Huo belittling Confucius or Zang Cang vilifying Mencius. You desire to be chief and arbitrator of the great nobles, yet you treat me thus!”

Now Kong Rong, who had recommended Mi Heng for employment, was among the guests, and he feared for the life of his friend. Wherefore, he tried to calm the storm.

“Mi Heng is only guilty of a misdemeanor,” said Kong Rong. “He is not a man likely to disturb your dreams like Fu Yue, Illustrious Sir.”

Pointing to Mi Heng, the Prime Minister said, “I will send you to Jingzhou as my messenger, and if Liu Biao surrenders to me, I will give you a post at court.”

But Mi Heng was unwilling to go. So Cao Cao bade two of his men prepare three horses, and they set Mi Heng on the middle one and dragged him along the road between them.

It is also related that a great number of officers of all ranks assembled at the East Gate to see the messenger start.

Xun Yu said, “When Mi Heng comes, we will not rise to salute him.”

So when Mi Heng came, dismounted, and entered the waiting room, they all sat stiff and silent. Mi Heng uttered a loud cry.

“What is that for?” said Xun Yu.

“Should not one cry out when one enters a coffin?” said Mi Heng.

“We may be corpses,” shouted they altogether, “but you are a wandering headless ghost.”

“I am a minister of Han and not a partisan of Cao Cao’s,” cried Mi Heng. “You cannot say I have no head.”

They were angry enough to kill him, but Xun Yu checked them, saying, “He is a paltry fellow. It is not worth soiling your blades with his blood.”

“I am paltry, and yet I have the soul of a man, and you are mere worms,” said Mi Heng.

They went their separate ways, all very angry.

Mi Heng went on his journey and presently reached Jingzhou, where he saw Liu Biao. After that, under pretense of extolling Liu Biao’s virtue, he lampooned Liu Biao, who was annoyed and sent him to Jiangxia to see Huang Zu.

“Why did you not put the fellow to death for lampooning you?” said one to Liu Biao.

“You see, he shamed Cao Cao, but Cao Cao did not kill him as Cao Cao feared to lose popular favor. So Cao Cao sent him to me, thinking to borrow my hand to slay him and so suffer the loss of my good name. I have sent him on to Huang Zu to let Cao Cao see that I understood.” Liu Biao’s clever caution met with general praise.

At that time, a messenger from Yuan Shao was also there with certain proposals for an alliance, and it was necessary to decide which aide to espouse. All the advisers came together to consider the question.

Then, Commander Han Song said, “As you have now two offers, you can please yourself and choose your own way to destroy your enemies, for if one refuses, you can follow the other. Now Cao Cao is an able general and has many capable officers in his train. It looks as though he may destroy Yuan Shao and then move his armies across the river. I fear, my lord, you would be unable then to withstand him. That being so, it would be wise to support Cao Cao, who will treat you with respect.”

Liu Biao replied, “You go to the capital and see how things tend. That will help me to decide.”

Han Song said, “The positions of master and servant are clearly defined. Now I am your man prepared to go all lengths for you and obey you to the last, whether in serving the Emperor or in following Cao Cao. But lest there should be any doubt, you must remember that if the Emperor gives me any office, then I shall become his servant and shall not be ready to face death for you.”

“You go and find out what you can. I have ideas in my mind.”

So Han Song took his leave and went to the capital, where he saw Cao Cao. Cao Cao gave him rank and made him Governor of Lingling.

Adviser Xun Yu remonstrated, saying, “This man came to spy out how things were moving. He has done nothing to deserve reward, and yet you give him an office like this. There were no such suspicious rumors connected with poor Mi Heng, and yet you sent him off and would never test his power.”

“Mi Heng shamed me too deeply before all the world. I am going to borrow Liu Biao’s hand to remove him. And you need say no more,” said Cao Cao.

Then Cao Cao sent Han Song back to his former master to tell him what had happened. Han Song came and was full of praise for the virtues of the court and was keen on persuading Liu Biao to espouse that side.

Then, Liu Biao suddenly turned angry, charged him with treachery, put him in prison, and threatened him with death.

“You turn your back on me,” cried Han Song. “I did not betray you.”

Kuai Liang remarked, “Han Song had foretold this possibility before he left. It is only what he expected.”

Liu Biao, who was just and reasonable, went no further.

Presently came the news that Mi Heng had been put to death by Huang Zu on account of a quarrel begun over the wine cups. Both being worse for liquor, they had begun to discuss the worth of people.

“You were in Xuchang,” said Huang Zu. “Who was there of worth?”

“The big boy was Kong Rong and the little one Yang Xiu. There was no one else to count.”

“What am I like?” said Huang Zu.

“You are like a god in a temple: you sit still and receive sacrifice, but the lack of intelligence is pitiful.”

“Do you regard me as a mere image?” cried Huang Zu, angrily.

So Huang Zu put the impudent speaker to death. Even at the very point of death, Mi Heng never ceased his railing and abuse.

“Alas!” sighed Liu Biao when he heard of Mi Heng’s fate. Then, Liu Biao had the victim honorably interred near Yingwu, on Parrot Island.



A later poet wrote of Mi Heng:

Huang Zu could brook no rival; at his word
Mi Heng met death, beneath the cruel sword.
His grave on Parrot Isle may yet be seen,
The river flowing past it, coldly green.

Cao Cao heard of the young man's death with pleasure.

“The putrid bookworm has just cut himself up with his own sharp tongue,” said he.

As there was no sign of Liu Biao coming to join him, Cao Cao began to think of coercion. Xun Yu dissuaded him from this course.

Said he, “Yuan Shao is not subjugated; Liu Bei is not destroyed. To attack Liu Biao would be to neglect the vital to care for the immaterial. Destroy the two chief enemies first, and the Han River is yours in one blow.”

And Cao Cao took the advice.

After the departure of Liu Bei, Dong Cheng and his fellow conspirators did nothing else day or night but try to evolve plans for the destruction of Cao Cao. But they could see no chance to attack. At the new-year audience, Cao Cao was odiously arrogant and overweening, and the chief conspirator's disgust was so intense that he fell ill.

Hearing of the State Uncle's indisposition, the Emperor sent the Court Physician to see him. The Court Physician at this time was a native of Luoyang named Ji Ping. A very famous physician, Ji Ping devoted himself wholly to the treatment of his court patient. Living in Dong Cheng's palace and seeing Dong Cheng at all times, Ji Ping soon found that some secret grief was sorely troubling him. But Ji Ping dared not ask questions.

One evening during the full moon festival, when the physician was just taking his leave, Dong Cheng kept him, and the two men had supper together. They ate talking for some time, and Dong Cheng by and by dropped off to sleep dressed as he was.

Presently, Wang Zifu and the others were announced. As they were coming in, Wang Zifu cried, "Our business is settled!"

"I should be glad to hear how," said Dong Cheng.

"Liu Biao has joined Yuan Shao, and five hundred thousand troops in fifty legions are on their way here by different routes. Moreover, Ma Teng and Han Sui are coming from the northwest with seven hundred thousand Xiliang troops. Cao Cao has moved every soldier outside Xuchang to meet the combined armies. There is a great banquet in his palace tonight. If we get together our young men and servants, we can muster more than a thousand, and we can surround the palace while Cao Cao is at the banquet and finish him off. We must not miss this."

Dong Cheng was more than delighted. He called his servants and armed them, put on his own armor and mounted his horse. The conspirators met, as they had arranged, just at the inner gate of the Prime Minister's palace.

It was the first watch. The small army marched straight in, Dong Cheng leading with his treasured sword drawn. His intended victim was at a

table in one of the private rooms. Dong Cheng rushed in, crying, "Cao Cao, you rebel, stay!" and dashed at Cao Cao who fell at the first blow.

And just then he woke up and found it was all a dream, but his mouth was still full of curses.

"Do you really wish to destroy Cao Cao?" said Ji Ping, going forward to his half-awakened patient.

This brought Dong Cheng to his senses. He stopped, terror-stricken, and made no reply.

"Do not be frightened, O Uncle," said the doctor. "Although I am a physician, I am also a man, and I never forget my emperor. You have seemed sad for many days, but I have never ventured to ask the reason. Now you have shown it in your dream, and I know your real feelings. If I can be of any use, I will help. Nothing can daunt me."

Dong Cheng covered his face and wept. "I fear you may not be true to me," cried he.

Ji Ping at once bit off a finger as a pledge of his faith. And then his host and patient brought forth the decree he had received in the girdle.

"I am afraid our schemes will come to naught," said Dong Cheng. "Liu Bei and Ma Teng are gone, and there is nothing we can do. That was the real reason I fell ill."

"It is not worth troubling you gentlemen with, for Cao Cao's life lies in these hands of mine," said Ji Ping.

"How can that be?"

"Because he is often ill with deep-seated pain in his head. When this comes on, he sends for me. When next he calls me, I only have to give him one dose and he will certainly die. We do not need any weapons."

“If only you could do it! You would be the savior of the dynasty. It depends upon you.”

Then, Ji Ping went away leaving his former patient a happy man. Dong Cheng strolled into the garden, and there he saw one of his servants, Qin Qingtong, whispering with one of the concubines, Yun Ying, in a dark corner. This annoyed him, and he called his attendants to seize them. He would have put them to death but for the intervention of his wife. At her request he spared their lives, but both were beaten forty canes, and the lad was thrown into a dungeon.

Sulky at this treatment, Qin Qingtong broke out of the cell in the night, climbed over the wall, and went straight to Cao Cao's palace, where he betrayed the conspiracy.

Cao Cao at once had him taken into a secret chamber and questioned him.

Qin Qingtong gave the names of the conspirators, saying, “Wang Zifu, Wu Zilan, Chong Ji, Wu Shi, Ma Teng, and my master have been meeting secretly. My master has a roll of white silk, with writing on it, but I do not know what it means. Yesterday, Ji Ping bit off one of his fingers as a pledge of fidelity. I saw that.”

Qin Qingtong was kept in a secret part of the palace, while his late master, Dong Cheng, only knowing that he had run away, took no special means to find him.

Soon after this, Cao Cao feigned a headache and sent for Ji Ping as usual.

“The rebel is done for,” thought Ji Ping, and he made a secret package of poison which he took with him to the palace of the Prime Minister. He found Cao Cao in bed. The patient bade the doctor prepare a potion for him.

“One draught will cure this disease,” said Ji Ping.

He bade them bring him a pot, and he prepared the potion in the room. When it had simmered for some time and was half-finished, the poison was added, and soon after, the physician presented the draught. Cao Cao, knowing it was poisoned, made excuses and would not swallow it.

“You should take it hot,” said the doctor. “Then there will be a gentle perspiration, and you will be better.”

“You are a scholar,” said Cao Cao, sitting up, “and know what is the correct thing to do. When the master is ill and takes drugs, the attendant first tastes them; when a man is ill, his son first tastes the medicine. You are my confidant and should drink first. Then, I will swallow the remainder.”

“Medicine is to treat disease. What is the use of anyone’s tasting it?” said Ji Ping.

But he guessed now that the conspiracy had been discovered, so he dashed forward, seized Cao Cao by the ear, and tried to pour the potion down his throat. Cao Cao pushed it away, and it spilled. The bricks upon which it fell were split asunder. Before Cao Cao could speak, his servants had already seized the assailant.

Said Cao Cao, “I am not ill. I only wanted to test you. So you really thought to poison me!”

He sent for a score of sturdy jailers, who carried off the prisoner to the inner apartments to be interrogated. Cao Cao took his seat in a pavilion, and the hapless physician, tightly bound, was thrown to the ground before him. The prisoner maintained a bold front.

Cao Cao said, “I thought you were a physician. How dared you try to poison me? Someone incited you to this crime. If you tell me, I will pardon you.”

“You are a rebel. You flout your Prince and injure your superiors. The whole empire wishes to kill you. Do you think I am the only one?”

Cao Cao again and again pressed the prisoner to tell what he knew, but he only replied that no one had sent him and it was his own desire.

“I have failed, and I can but die,” added Ji Ping.

Cao Cao angrily bade the jailers give him a severe beating, and they dogged him for two hours. His skin hung in tatters, the flesh was battered, and the blood from his wounds ran down the steps. Then, fearing he might die and his evidence be lost, Cao Cao bade them cease and remove him. They took him off to a quiet place where he might recover somewhat.

Having issued orders to prepare a banquet for the next day, Cao Cao invited all the courtiers thereto. Dong Cheng was the only one who excused himself, saying he was unwell. The other conspirators dared not stay away, as they felt they would be suspected.

Tables were laid in the private apartments, and after several courses, the host said, “There is not much to amuse us today, but I have a man to show you that will sober you.” Turning to the jailers, he said, “Bring him in!” and the hapless Ji Ping appeared, securely fastened in a wooden collar. He was placed where all could see him. “You officials do not know that this man is connected with a gang of evil doers who desire to overturn the government and even injure me. However, Heaven has defeated their plans, but I still desire that you hear his evidence.”

Then, Cao Cao ordered the jailers to beat their prisoner. They did so till Ji Ping lay unconscious, when they revived him by spraying water over his face. As soon as he came to, he glared at his oppressor and ground his teeth.

“Cao Cao, you rebel! What are you waiting for? Why not kill me?” cried Ji Ping.

Cao Cao replied, “The conspirators were only six at first; you made the seventh. Is that true?”

Here the prisoner broke in with more abuse, while Wang Zifu and the other three conspirators exchanged glances, looking as though they were sitting on a rug full of needles. Cao Cao continued his torture of the prisoner, beating him into unconsciousness and reviving him with cold water, the victim disdaining to ask mercy. Finally, Cao Cao realized he would incriminate none of his accomplices, and so he told the jailers to remove Ji Ping.

At the close of the banquet, when the guests were dispersing, four of them—the four conspirators—were invited to remain behind for supper. They were so terrified that their souls seemed no longer to inhabit their bodies, but there was no saying nay to the invitation.

Presently, Cao Cao said, “Still there is something I want to speak about, so I have asked you to stay for a time longer. I do not know what you four have been arranging with Dong Cheng.”

“Nothing at all,” said Wang Zifu.

“And what is written on the white silk?” asked Cao Cao.

They all said they knew nothing about it.

Then, Cao Cao ordered the runaway servant to be brought in. As soon as Qin Qingtong came, Wang Zifu said, “Well, what have you seen and where?”

Qin Qingtong replied, “You five very carefully chose retired places to talk in, and you secretly signed a white roll. You cannot deny that.”

Wang Zifu replied, "This miserable creature was punished for misbehavior with one of Uncle Dong Cheng's maids, and now, because of that, he slanders his master. You must not listen to him."

"Ji Ping tried to pour poison down my throat. Who told him to do that if it was not Dong Cheng?" said Cao Cao.

They all said they knew nothing about who it was.

"So far," said Cao Cao, "matters are only beginning, and there is a chance of forgiveness. But if the thing grows, it will be difficult not to take notice of it."

The whole four vigorously denied that any plot existed. However, Cao Cao called up his henchmen, and the four men were put into confinement.

Next day, Cao Cao, with a large following, went to the State Uncle's palace to ask after his health.

Dong Cheng came out to receive his visitor, who at once said, "Why did you not come last night?"

"I am not quite well yet and have to be very careful about going out," replied Dong Cheng.

"One might say you were suffering from national sorrow, eh?" said Cao Cao. Dong Cheng started. Cao Cao continued, "Have you heard of the Ji Ping affair?"

"No. What is it?"

Cao Cao smiled coldly, saying, "How can it be you do not know?"

He turned to his attendants and told them to bring in the prisoner, while he went on talking to his host about national illness.

Dong Cheng was much put about and knew not what to do. Soon, the jailers led in the physician to the steps of the hall. At once, the bound man began to rail at Cao Cao as rebel and traitor.

“This man,” said Cao Cao, pointing to Ji Ping, “has implicated Wang Zifu and three others, all of whom are now under arrest. There is one more whom I have not caught yet.” Turning to the physician, continued Cao Cao, “Who sent you to poison me? Quick, tell me!”

“Heaven sent me to slay a traitor!”

Cao Cao angrily ordered them to beat Ji Ping again, but there was no part of his body that could be beaten. Dong Cheng sat looking at him, his heart feeling as if transfixed with a dagger.

“You were born with ten fingers. How is it you have now only nine?”

Ji Ping replied, “I bit off one as a pledge when I swore to slay a traitor.”

Cao Cao told them to bring a knife, and they lopped off his other nine fingers. “Now they are all off. That will teach you to make pledges.”

“Still I have a mouth that can swallow a traitor and a tongue that can curse him,” said Ji Ping. Cao Cao told them to cut out his tongue. Ji Ping said, “Do not. I cannot endure any more punishment, I shall have to speak out. Loosen my bonds.”

“Loose them. There is no reason why not,” said Cao Cao.

They loosed him. As soon as he was free, Ji Ping stood up, turned his face toward the Emperor’s palace and bowed, saying, “It is Heaven’s will that thy servant has been unable to remove the evil.”

Then, he turned and smashed his head into the steps and died. His body was quartered and exposed. This happened in the first month of the fifth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 200).



A certain historian wrote a poem:

There lived in Han a simple physician.
No warrior, yet brave
Enough to risk his very life
His Emperor to save.
Alas! He failed; but lasting fame
Is his; he feared not death;
He cursed the traitorous Prime Minister
Unto his latest breath.



Seeing his victim had passed beyond the realm of punishment, Cao Cao had Qin Qingtong led in. “Do you know this man, Uncle?”

“Yes,” cried Dong Cheng. “So the runaway servant is here. He ought to be put to death!”

“He just told me of your treachery. He is my witness,” said Cao Cao. “Who would dare kill him?”

“How can you, the First Minister of State, heed the unsupported tale of an absconding servant?”

“But I have Wang Zifu and the others in prison,” said Cao Cao. “And how can you rebut their evidence?”

He then called in the remainder of his followers and ordered them to search Dong Cheng’s bedroom. They did so and found the decree that had been given to him in the girdle and the pledge signed by the conspirators.

“You mean rat!” cried Cao Cao. “You dared do this?” He gave orders to arrest the whole household without exception.

Then, he returned to his palace with the incriminating documents and called all his advisers together to discuss the dethronement of the Emperor and the setting up of a successor.

Many decrees, blood-written, have issued,
accomplishing nothing,
One inscribed pledge was fraught with mountains of
sorrow.

The reader who wishes to know the fate of the Emperor must read the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VI

CHAPTER 24

CAO CAO MURDERS CONSORT DONG; LIU BEI FLEES TO YUAN SHAO.

The last chapter closed with the discovery of the “girdle decree” and the assembly of Cao Cao’s advisers to consider the deposition of Emperor Xian.

Cheng Yu spoke strongly against this, saying, “Illustrious Sir, the means by which you impress the world and direct the government is the command of the House of Han. In these times of turmoil and rivalry among the nobles, such a step as the deposition of the ruler would certainly bring about civil war and is much to be deprecated.”

After reflection, Cao Cao abandoned the project. But Dong Cheng’s plot was not to go unpunished. All five of the conspirators, with every member of their households—seven hundred at least—were taken and put to death at one or another of the gates of the city. The people wept at such merciless and wholesale slaughter.



A secret decree in a girdle sewn,
In red blood written, the Emperor’s own,
To the staunch and faithful Dong Cheng addressed,
Who had saved him once when enemies pressed.
And who, sore grieved at his Sovereign’s fate,
Expressed in dreams his ceaseless hate,
Carried misfortune and death in its train,

But glory to him who died in vain.

Another poet wrote of the sad fate of Wang Zifu and his friends:

Great-heartedly these signed the silken roll,
And pledged themselves to save their king from
shame.

Alas! Black death of them took heavy toll,
To write their names upon the roll of fame.



But the slaughter of the conspirators and their whole households did not appease the wrath of the Prime Minister. The Emperor's consort was a sister of Dong Cheng; sword in hand, Cao Cao went into the Forbidden City, determined to slay her, also. The Emperor cherished her tenderly, all the more so as she was then in the fifth month of pregnancy.

That day, as they often did, the Emperor, Consort Dong, and Empress Fu were sitting in their private apartment, secretly talking of the decree entrusted to Dong Cheng and asking each other why nothing seemed to have been done. The sudden appearance of the angry Prime Minister, armed as he was, frightened them greatly.

“Does Your Majesty know that Dong Cheng conspired against me?” said he.

“Dong Zhuo died long ago,” replied the Emperor.

“Not Dong Zhuo—Dong Cheng!” roared Cao Cao.

The Emperor's heart trembled, but he gasped out, “Really, I did not know!”

“So the cut finger and the blood-written decree are all forgotten, eh?”

The Emperor was silent. Cao Cao bade his lictors seize Consort Dong. The Emperor interposed, asking pity for her condition.

But Cao Cao said, "If Heaven had not interposed and defeated the plot, I would be a dead man. How could I leave this woman to work evil on me by and by?"

Said the Emperor, "Immure her in one of the palaces till her confinement. Do not harm her now!"

"Do you wish me to spare her offspring to avenge the mother?" said Cao Cao.

"I pray that my body may be spared mutilation and not put to shame," said Consort Dong.

Cao Cao bade his men show her the white silk cord. The Emperor wept bitterly.

"Do not hate me in the under-realms of the Nine Golden Springs," said the Emperor to her.

His tears fell like rain. Empress Fu also joined in the lament, but Cao Cao said, "You are behaving like a lot of children."

And he told the lictors to take Consort Dong away and strangle her in the courtyard.



In vain had the fair girl found favor in the sight of her lord.

She died, and the fruit of her womb perished.

Stern and calm her lord sat, powerless to save.

Hiding his face while tears gushed forth.



When leaving the Palace, Cao Cao gave strict orders to the keepers, saying “Anyone of the imperial relatives by marriage who enters the Palace will be put to death, and the guards will share the same punishment for lack of zeal.”

To make more sure, he appointed three thousand Imperial Guards from his own troops and appointed Cao Hong to the command.

Then, said Cao Cao to his counselor Cheng Yu, “The conspirators in the capital have been removed, it is true, but there are yet two others, Ma Teng and Liu Bei. These must not be left.”

Cheng Yu replied, “Ma Teng is strong in the west and would not be easily captured. He might be enticed to the capital by suave words and kindly praises, when he would be at your mercy. Liu Bei is at Xuzhou, strongly posted in an ox-horn formation, and not to be lightly attacked. More than this, Yuan Shao is at Guandu, and his one desire is to attack you. Any attempt on the east will send Liu Bei to Yuan Shao for help, and Yuan Shao will come here at once. Then, what will you do?”

“You are at fault,” replied Cao Cao. “Liu Bei is a bold warrior. If we wait till he is fully fledged and winged, he will be more difficult to deal with. Yuan Shao may be strong, but he is not to be feared. He is too undeciding to act.”

As they were discussing these things, Guo Jia came in, and Cao Cao suddenly referred the matter to him.

“If I attack Liu Bei, then Yuan Shao is to be feared. What do you think of it?”

Guo Jia said, "Yuan Shao by nature is dilatory and hesitating, and his various advisers are jealous of each other. He is not to be feared. Liu Bei is getting together a new army and has not yet won their hearts. You could settle the east in one battle."

"This advice is in harmony with my thinking," said Cao Cao.

And he prepared an army of two hundred thousand troops, to move in five divisions against Xuzhou.

Scouts took the news of these preparations to Xuzhou. Sun Qian first went to Xiapi to tell Guan Yu and then went to Xiaopei to tell Liu Bei. The two discussed the situation and decided that help must be sought. So letters were written to Yuan Shao and given to Sun Qian, who went north, sought Tian Feng, and asked him to arrange an interview with Yuan Shao. Sun Qian was introduced and presented his letters.

But Yuan Shao was of melancholy countenance, and his dress was all awry. Tian Feng said, "Why this disarray, my lord?"

"I am about to die," replied Yuan Shao.

"But why do you utter such words?"

"I have three sons, but only the youngest is clever enough to understand my ideas. Now, he is suffering from scabies, which places his life in jeopardy. Think you that I have any heart to talk over any other affairs?"

"But," said Tian Feng, "the present combination of circumstances is unparalleled. Cao Cao is going to attack the east, and Xuchang will be empty. You can enter it with a few volunteers and so perform good service

to the Emperor and save the people from sorrow. You have only to make up your mind to act.”

“I know the chance is excellent, but I am worried and distressed and fear failure.”

“What are you distressed about?” said Tian Feng.

“Among my sons, only this special one is remarkable; if anything happens, I am done.”

Thus, it became evident that no army would be dispatched.

In confirmation of this, Yuan Shao said to Sun Qian, “Go home and tell Liu Bei the real reason, and say that if anything untoward happen, he can come over to me, and I will find some means of helping him.”

Tian Feng struck the ground with his staff. “It is such a pity!” cried he. “Just as a unique opportunity presents itself, everything is spoiled by the illness of a child.”

He went out. Sun Qian saw that no help could be hoped for and set out to return. When he had arrived and related what he had seen, Liu Bei was quite alarmed and asked what could be done.

“Do not be troubled, brother,” said Zhang Fei. “We can destroy Cao Cao merely by a sudden attack before his army has time to camp.”

“That would be according to the rules of war,” said Liu Bei. “You have always been a bold warrior, and that move against Liu Dai shows that you are becoming a strategist too.”

So Liu Bei gave Zhang Fei command of enough soldiers to carry out this plan.

Now while Cao Cao was in the midst of his march toward Xiaopei, a tornado sprang up, and the howling gale tore down one of the banners and broke the staff. Cao Cao called together his advisers and leaders to ask them what this portended.

Xun Yu said, "From what direction was the wind at the time, and what was the color of the flag?"

"The wind was from the southeast, and the flag was blue and red."

"There is only one interpretation: a raid on the camp will occur tonight."

Cao Cao nodded. At that moment, Mao Jie entered and reported a similar incident. Cao Cao asked him the portent.

"My thinking tells me it means a night raid," replied he.



Alas for the weakness of this descendant of kings!

He placed his faith on a night raid.

But the broken staff of a banner warned his enemy.

Why should the ancient of days favor the wicked?



"This is evidently providence," said Cao Cao. And he began to make preparations. He sent nine bodies of troops to take stations, leaving only one of them as if camped, while he placed the others in ambush at eight points.

There was but little moonlight as Liu Bei and Zhang Fei marched their respective armies toward Cao Cao's camp. They had left Sun Qian to guard

Xiaopei. Zhang Fei, since he was the originator of the stratagem, led the way with a light cavalry. As they drew near, everything seemed very quiet and no one seemed moving.

Then, suddenly, lights flashed out all about them, and Zhang Fei saw he had fallen into a trap. At once, from all eight directions came out the ambushing troops. From east, west, north, south were Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Li Dian, and Yu Jin. From northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest were Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Xu Huang, and Yue Jin.

Zhang Fei, dashing this way and rushing that, guarding his van and protecting his rear, vainly tried to clear himself. The soldiers he had, being originally Cao Cao's troops, soon gave in and returned to their old leader. The situation became very desperate.

Zhang Fei met Xu Huang and engaged him, but his rear was also attacked by Yue Jin. At length, he cut an alley out and, with a half-score of his troops, started to return to Xiaopei. The retreat was cut off. He thought to make for Xuzhou but felt certain that way was also barred. No other way seemed open, and so he made for the Mangdang Hills.

As Liu Bei drew near the camp, he intended to attack, when he heard the din of battle. Then, he was attacked in the rear and very soon had lost half his force. Next, Xiahou Dun came to attack. Thereupon, Liu Bei bolted. He was pursued by Xiahou Yuan. Presently, Liu Bei looked about him and found he had less than half-a-hundred soldiers following him. He set his face in the direction of Xiaopei.

But before long Liu Bei saw that place was in flames. So he changed his plan and went toward Xiapi. However, he found the whole countryside full of the enemy, and he could not get through. So he bethought himself of the promise of Yuan Shao—that he would find refuge if things went unfavorably—and decided to go to Yuan Shao till he could form some other

plan. Wherefore, he took the Qingzhou road. But it, also, was blocked, and he went into the open country and made his way north, not without being pursued and losing the remainder of his few followers.

Liu Bei hastened toward Qingzhou City, traveling one hundred miles a day. When he reached the city and summoned the gate, the guards asked who he was and they told the Governor, who was Yuan Shao's eldest son, Yuan Tan. Yuan Tan was greatly surprised, but he opened the gates and went to meet Liu Bei, whom he treated with due consideration.

Liu Bei told the story of his defeat and said he wished for harbor. He was given suitable quarters and hospitably entertained, while the young man wrote to inform his father. Then, Yuan Tan provided an escort and sent Liu Bei on his journey as far as the boundary of Pingyuan.

At the city of Yejun, Liu Bei was met by Yuan Shao in person ten miles outside the city, with a great escort. Liu Bei made a humble obeisance, which Yuan Shao hastened to return and said, "I have been very distressed that, on account of my son's illness, I did not come to your aid. It is a great joy to see you; the one desire of my life is satisfied."

Liu Bei replied, "The poor Liu Bei you see here has long desired to take refuge with you, but fate has hitherto denied him that privilege. Now, attacked by Cao Cao, my family lost, I remembered that you, General, would receive good people from all sides. Wherefore, I put my pride in my pocket. I trust that I may be found worthy and one day I will prove my gratitude."

Yuan Shao received him with much pleasure and treated him exceedingly well. And they both lived in Yuan Shao's home region of

Jizhou.

After the capture of Xiaopei, Cao Cao pressed on toward Xuzhou City, which, after a short defense and the flight of Mi Zhu and Jian Yong, was surrendered by Chen Deng. Cao Cao led his army into the city, restored order, and pacified the people.

Next, he wanted to press on to Xiapi, where Guan Yu was holding out and keeping guard of Liu Bei's family.

Xun Yu said, "Guan Yu is there, in charge of his brother's family, and he will defend the city to the last. If you do not take it quickly, Yuan Shao will get it."

Cao Cao said, "I have always loved Guan Yu, both for his warlike abilities and his principles. I would engage him to enter my service. I would rather send someone to talk him into surrender."

"He will not do that," said Guo Jia. "His sense of right is too solid. I fear anyone who went to speak with him would suffer."

Then, suddenly, a man stepped out, saying, "I know him slightly, and I will go." The speaker was Zhang Liao.

Cheng Yu looked at him and said, "Though you are an old acquaintance, I do not think you are equal to talking over Guan Yu. But I have a scheme that will so entangle him that he will have no alternative; he will have to enter the service of the Prime Minister."

They set the fatal spring beside the lordly tiger's trail,

They hide the hook with fragrant bait to catch the
mighty whale.

How Guan Yu was to be entrapped will be told in the next chapter.



END OF ACT VI

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT VII:

THE MAN WITH THE BEAUTIFUL BEARD:

GUAN YU'S JOURNEY

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VII

CHAPTER 25

BESIEGED IN TUSHAN, GUAN YU MAKES THREE CONDITIONS; RELIEVED
AT BAIMA, CAO CAO BEHOLDS A MARVEL.

The plan to seduce Guan Yu from allegiance to his Brothers was now announced by Cheng Yu: “Since Guan Yu is far braver than ordinary warriors, he can only be overreached by superior cunning. Now send some of the captured soldiers who have lately been of Liu Bei’s army into Xiapi, where they shall say they have come back. They shall thus be our allies on the inside. Then, an attack and a feigned defeat will entice Guan Yu to a distance from the city. And his return journey shall be cut off.”

Cao Cao accepted the scheme, and a few score of the troops who had been in Xuzhou were sent to the city of Xiapi. Guan Yu believed the story they told and trusted them. So they were suffered to remain.

After this part of the game had been played, Xiahou Dun led forward five thousand troops against the city. At first, Guan Yu would not accept the challenge. But provoked by men sent to hurl insults at him from the foot of the wall, his wrath got the better of him, and he moved out with three thousand troops.

After the leaders had exchanged some ten bouts, Xiahou Dun made to run away. Guan Yu pursued. Xiahou Dun stopped and made a stand, then he fled again. Thus alternately fighting and retiring, he enticed Guan Yu seven miles from Xiapi. Then Guan Yu, suddenly remembering the risk to the city, drew off his army to return homeward.

Soon, at the sound of a signal bomb, from the left and right out moved two bodies of troops led by Xu Huang and Xu Chu that barred his way. Guan Yu hastened along a road that seemed to offer retreat, but from both sides his ambushing enemies shot their crossbows, and the arrows flew like locusts on the wind. No way past was found, and he turned back.

Then, both bodies joined in attacking him. He drove them off and got onto the road to his own city, but soon, Xiahou Dun came up again and attacked fiercely as before.

Evening came, and still, Guan Yu was hemmed in, so he went up a low hill of the Tushan Mountains upon which he encamped for a rest.

Guan Yu was surrounded on all sides by enemies. By and by, looking toward his city, he saw the glow of fire. It meant that the traitors, who had come in to surrender, had opened the gate, and the enemy had gone in force. They had made the fires in order to perplex and distress Guan Yu, and indeed, the sight saddened him.

In the night, he made efforts to escape from the hill, but every attempt was checked by flights of arrows. At daybreak, he prepared for one more effort, but before moving, he saw a horseman riding up at full speed and presently discerned Zhang Liao.

When within speaking distance, Guan Yu said, "Are you come to fight me, Zhang Liao?"

"No," replied Zhang Liao. "I am come to see you because of our old friendship." Wherefore, Zhang Liao threw aside his sword, dismounted, and came forward saluting. And the two sat down.

"Then naturally you have come to talk me over," said Guan Yu.

“Not so!” said Zhang Liao. “Some time ago, you saved me. Can I help saving you?”

“Then you desire to help me.”

“Not exactly that,” replied Zhang Liao.

“Then what are you doing here, if you have not come to help me?”

“Nothing is known of the fate of your elder Brother, nor whether your younger Brother is alive or dead. Last night, your city fell into the hands of Cao Cao, but neither soldiers nor people were harmed, and a special guard was set over the family of Liu Bei, lest they be alarmed. I came to tell you how well they had been treated.”

“This is certainly talking me over,” said Guan Yu. “Though escape is impossible, I am not perturbed. I look upon death as going home. You had better depart quickly and let me go down and begin the struggle again.”

“Surely, you must know everybody will ridicule you when they hear of this,” said Zhang Liao.

“I shall die for loyalty and righteousness. Who will laugh?” said Guan Yu.

“You would be guilty of three faults if you died.”

“Tell me them,” said Guan Yu.

“First of all, you and your elder Brother pledged yourselves in the Peach Garden to die or to live together. Now, your Brother has been defeated, and you want to fight to the death. Therefore, if your brother appears again by and by and wants your help, he will seek it in vain. Is this anything else than betraying the Peach Garden Oath?

“Secondly, you are in charge of your Brother’s family and, if you fought and died, the two women would be left forlorn and without a protector. That would be a betrayal of trust.

“Thirdly, your military skill stands out conspicuously and will go down in history. If you do not aid your Brother in his noble attempt to maintain the dynasty, then all your labors and sufferings will have been spent to win a worthless reputation as a valiant fool. Where is the sense in that? I feel it my duty to point out these three faults to you.”

Guan Yu remained silent and thought for some time. Then, he said, “You have spoken of my three faults. What do you desire?”

“You are surrounded with the certainty of death if you do not yield. There is no advantage in a useless death. Wherefore, your best course is to yield to Cao Cao till you hear news of Liu Bei and can rejoin him. Thus, you will ensure the safety of the two ladies and also keep inviolate the Peach Garden compact. You will preserve a useful life. Brother, you must reflect on these things.”

“Brother, you have spoken of three advantages; now, I have three conditions. If the Prime Minister concedes these, then will I doff my armor. If he refuses, then I prefer to be guilty of the three faults and die.”

“Why would the Prime Minister not concede them? He is most liberal and large-minded. I pray you let me hear your conditions.”

“The first is that, as I and the Imperial Uncle have sworn to support the Hans, I now submit to the Emperor and not to His Prime Minister Cao Cao. The second condition is that suitable provision be made for the two ladies under my care and that no one shall be allowed to approach them. The third is that I shall be allowed to set off to rejoin Uncle Liu Bei so soon as I shall hear where he is, whether it be far or near. I require all these to be satisfied. Failing a single one, I will not submit. Wherefore, Zhang Liao, I pray you hasten back and announce them.”

Zhang Liao lost no time in riding back to Cao Cao. When he spoke of Guan Yu’s intention to submit to the Hans but not to Cao Cao, the latter

laughed, saying, "As I am a minister of Han, so am I Han. I grant that."

Zhang Liao then spoke of provision due to their rank and security from molestation for the ladies, to which Cao Cao replied, "I will give them twice the regular amount for an Uncle of the Emperor. As for securing them from molestation, that is simple. The ordinary domestic law is enough. Why should there be any doubt?"

Then, said Zhang Liao, "Whenever he shall get news of the whereabouts of Liu Bei, he must go to him."

At this, Cao Cao shook his head, saying, "Then I am merely to feed Guan Yu. What is the use of this? I cannot consent."

Zhang Liao replied, "You must know of Yu Rang's saying, 'the difference in behavior brought about by difference of treatment'? Liu Bei treats Guan Yu just kindly and liberally. You can surely engage Guan Yu's heart and support by being kinder and more liberal."

"What you say is much to the point. I will grant the three conditions," said Cao Cao.

Whereupon, Zhang Liao left to carry the news to Guan Yu, still on the summit of the Tushan Mountains.

Said Guan Yu, "Now, I expect the army to withdraw so that I may enter the city to tell the two ladies what has been arranged. After that, I submit at once."

Zhang Liao rode back once more with this request, and the order was given for the army to retire three miles.

"Do not do this," said Xun Yu. "I fear treachery."

"He will certainly not break faith," said Cao Cao. "He is too high-principled."

The army retired, and Guan Yu with his force reentered the city of Xiapi, where he saw that the people were following their ordinary avocations in tranquility. He came to the palace and went in to see the two ladies, who hastened to meet him.

He bowed to them below the steps and said, "I apologize for having caused you to feel alarmed."

"Where is the Uncle?" asked they.

"I know not whither he has gone."

"What do you intend to do, Brother-in-law?"

"I went out of the city to try a last battle. I was surrounded on a hilltop, and Zhang Liao has urged me to yield. I proposed three conditions, all of which were conceded, and the enemy drew off to allow me to return to the city. Unless I have your decision, Sisters-in-law, I scarcely dare to take any final step."

They asked what were the conditions and were told.

Lady Gan said, "When Cao Cao's army came in, we took it to mean certain death. But it is scarcely credible that not a hair of our heads has been disturbed. Not a soldier has dared enter our doors.

"You have accepted the conditions, Brother-in-law, and there is no need to ask our consent. Our only fear is that he will not let you go by and by to search for the Uncle."

"Sisters-in-law, you need not be anxious. I will see to that."

"You must decide everything and need not ask us."

Guan Yu withdrew and then, with a small escort, went to his interview with Cao Cao.

Cao Cao came to the outermost gate to welcome Guan Yu, who dismounted and made obeisance. Cao Cao returned his salute with the greatest cordiality.

“The leader of a defeated army is grateful for the graciousness that has preserved his life,” said Guan Yu.

“I have so long admired your loyalty and high principles that this happy meeting gratifies the desire of my whole life,” replied Cao Cao.

“As the Prime Minister has granted the three requests which my friend petitioned for on my behalf, there is now but little to discuss,” said Guan Yu.

“As I have spoken, so be it. I could not break faith,” replied Cao Cao.

“Whenever I hear where Uncle Liu Bei is, I must certainly go to him, even if through fire and water. It may be that there will be no time nor opportunity of saying farewell. I trust you will understand the reason.”

“If Liu Bei should prove to be alive, you must certainly be allowed to go to him. But I fear that in the confusion he may have lost his life. You may set your mind at rest and let me make inquiries.”

Guan Yu thanked him. Then, a banquet was prepared in Guan Yu’s honor. Next day, the army started on its homeward march.

For the journey to the capital, a carriage was prepared for the two ladies, and Guan Yu was its guard. On the road, they rested at a certain post station, and Cao Cao, anxious to compromise Guan Yu by beguiling him into forgetfulness of his duty, assigned Guan Yu to the same apartment as his Sisters-in-law. Guan Yu stood the whole night before the door with a lighted candle in his hand. Not once did he yield to fatigue. Cao Cao’s respect for him could not but increase.

At the capital, the Prime Minister assigned a dignified residence to Guan Yu, which he immediately divided into two enclosures, the inner one for the two ladies and the other for himself. He placed a guard of eighteen of his veterans over the women's quarters.

Guan Yu was presented to Emperor Xian, who conferred upon him the rank of General Who Serves the Hans. Guan Yu expressed his thanks to the Emperor.

Next day, Cao Cao made a great banquet, inviting all his advisers and officers, solely in honor of Guan Yu, who sat in the seat of honor. Beside this, Guan Yu received presents of silks and gold and silver vessels, all of which Guan Yu sent into the ladies' quarters for their use and keeping.

In fact, from the day of arrival in the capital, Guan Yu was treated with marked respect and distinction, small banquets following each other every three days, and large banquets held every five days.

Cao Cao also presented him with ten most lovely serving girls. Guan Yu sent these also within to wait upon his two Sisters-in-law.

Every third day, Guan Yu went to the door of the women's quarters to inquire after their welfare, and then they asked if any news of the wanderer had come. This ceremony closed with the words: "Brother-in-law, you may retire when you wish."

Cao Cao heard of this extremely correct behavior and thought all the more of the man for it.

One day Cao Cao noticed that the robe Guan Yu was wearing was old and frayed. Taking his measurements, Cao Cao had a new one made of fine brocade and presented it to him. Guan Yu took it and put it on under the old robe so that the latter covered it.

"Why so very thrifty?" laughed Cao Cao.

“It is not thrift,” was his reply. “The old robe was a gift from my brother, and I wear it because it reminds me of him. I could not allow the new gift to eclipse his old one.”

“How very high-principled!” said Cao Cao, sighing.

One day, when Guan Yu was at home, there came a messenger to say that the two women had thrown themselves on the ground and were weeping. They would not say why.

Guan Yu set his dress in order, went over, and knelt by the door, saying, “Why this grief, Sisters-in-law?”

Lady Gan replied, “In the night, I dreamed that the Uncle had fallen into a pit. I woke up and told Lady Mi, and we think he must be dead. So we weep.”

“Dreams are not to be credited,” he replied. “You dreamed of him because you were thinking of him. Pray do not grieve.”

Just then, Guan Yu was invited to another banquet, so he took leave of the ladies and went. Seeing Guan Yu looked sad and tearful, his host asked the reason.

“My Sisters-in-law have been weeping for my Brother, and I cannot help being sad in sympathy.”

Cao Cao smiled and tried to cheer up his guest. Cao Cao plied Guan Yu with wine so that Guan Yu became quite intoxicated and sat stroking his beard and saying, “What a useless thing am I! I could do no service for my country, and I have parted from my elder Brother.”

“How many hairs in your beard?” suddenly asked his host.

“Some hundreds, perhaps. In the autumn, a few fall out, but in the winter, it is fullest. Then, I use a black, silk bag to keep the hairs from being broken,” replied Guan Yu.

Cao Cao had a bag made for him to protect his beard. Soon after, when they were at court, the Emperor asked what was the bag he saw on Guan Yu's breast.

"My beard is rather long, Your Majesty," said Guan Yu. "So the Prime Minister gave me a bag to protect it."

The Emperor bade him take off the bag and show his beard in all its fullness, and it fell in rippling waves below his breast.

"Really a most beautiful beard!" said the Emperor.

This is why people call him: "The Man with the Beautiful Beard."

Another time, after a banquet, Cao Cao was watching his guest set off from the gate of his palace when he noticed that his charger was very thin.

"Why is it so thin?" said Cao Cao.

"My worthless body is rather heavy and really too much for it. It is always out of condition."

Cao Cao at once told his attendants to bring out a certain steed, and before long it appeared. It was red, like glowing charcoal, and a handsome creature in every way.

"Do you recognize it?" asked Cao Cao.

"Why, it is no other than Red Hare!" cried Guan Yu.

"Yes, it is Red Hare," said Cao Cao. And he presented the horse, all fully caparisoned, to his guest.

Guan Yu bowed many times and thanked him again and again, till Cao Cao began to feel displeased and said, "I have given you many things—lovely handmaids and gold and silks—and never won a bow of gratitude from you before. This horse seems to please you better than all the rest. Why do you think so poorly of the damsels and so much of the steed?"

“I know the horse: it can travel three hundred miles a day, and I am very lucky to get him. Now, as soon as I find out where my Brother is, I can get to him in a single day,” said Guan Yu.

Cao Cao grumbled to himself and began to repent of his gift.



Fortune dealt a stunning blow, still he played his part;
Partitioning his dwelling proved his purity of heart.
The crafty minister desired to win him to his side,
But felt that failure was foredoomed however much he
tried.

Said Cao Cao to Zhang Liao, “I have treated Guan Yu pretty liberally, but he still cherishes the desire to leave me. Do you know if it is really so?”

“I will try to find out,” was the reply.

So Zhang Liao took an early opportunity to see Guan Yu, and when the courtesies of the visit were over, Zhang Liao said, “I recommended you to the Prime Minister, and you have not lost much by that.”

“I am deeply affected by his kindness and bounty,” said Guan Yu, “but, though my body is here, I am yet always thinking of my Brother.”

“Your words do not express present conditions quite correctly. One who lives in the world without discrimination and consideration of his relations with others is not the most admirable type of person. Even Liu Bei never treated you better than does the Prime Minister. Why, then, do you maintain this desire to get away?”

“I know only too well that he has been most kind, but I have also received great kindness from Uncle Liu Bei. Beside, we have sworn to die together, and I cannot remain here. But before I go, I must try to render the Prime Minister some signal-service to prove my gratitude.”

“Supposing Liu Bei has left the world, whither will you go?” said Zhang Liao.

“I will follow him to the nether realms of the Nine Golden Springs.”

There could no longer be the least doubt as to Guan Yu’s intentions, and Zhang Liao told Cao Cao just how matters stood. Cao Cao sighed.

“To serve one’s chief with unswerving fidelity is a proof of the highest principle of all,” said he.

Said Xun Yu, “He spoke of performing some act of service before leaving. If he gets no chance for such a thing, he will not be able to go.”

Cao Cao agreed that this was so.

Liu Bei went to Yuan Shao for refuge. Here, Liu Bei was always sorrowful and, when asked the reason, said he did not know where his Brothers were nor what had happened to his family since they fell into the hands of Cao Cao.

“Why should I not be sad when I have failed my country and my family?” said he.

“I have long wished to attack Xuchang,” said Yuan Shao. “Now it is autumn and just the time for an expedition, so let us discuss plans for the destruction of Cao Cao.”

Tian Feng at once opposed this. "When Cao Cao attacked Xuzhou and Xuchang was undefended, you let the chance slip by. Now that Xuzhou has been captured, and their soldiers are flushed with victory, it would be madness to attempt it. It is necessary to await another chance."

"Let me think about it," said Yuan Shao.

He asked advice from Liu Bei whether to attack or to hold on.

Liu Bei replied, "Cao Cao is a rebel. I think you are failing in your duty if you do not attack him."

"Your words are good," said Yuan Shao.

He made up his mind to move. But again, the adviser Tian Feng intervened.

Then, Yuan Shao grew angry, saying, "You fellows who cultivate literature and despise war have made me miss a lot!"

Tian Feng bowed his head and said, "Neglect your servant's wise words, and you will fail in the field."

Yuan Shao was so angry that he wanted to put Tian Feng to death. However, Liu Bei begged him off, and he was only imprisoned.

Seeing the fate of his colleague, another adviser, Ju Shou, assembled his clan and distributed among them all his possessions, saying, "I go with the army. If we succeed, then nothing can exceed our glory, but if we are defeated, the risk I run is great." His friends wept as they said farewell.

General Yan Liang was appointed to the command of the advance guard to attack Baima.

Then, Ju Shou first protested, "His mind is too narrow for such a post. He is brave but unequal to such a trust."

"You are not the sort of man to measure my best generals," replied Yuan Shao.

The army marched to Liyang, and Governor Liu Yue of Dongjun sent an urgent call to Xuchang for aid. Cao Cao moved his armies hastily.

As soon as the news of battle got about, Guan Yu went to see the Prime Minister and said, "Illustrious Sir, the army is mobilized. I volunteer to be the van leader."

"I scarcely dare put you to such inconvenience, but presently, if need arises, I will call upon you."

So Guan Yu retired, and one hundred fifty thousand soldiers marched out in three directions. On the road, the letters from Liu Yue arrived praying for help, and Cao Cao marched the first fifty thousand troops to Baima and took up a position supported by the hills. In the wide plains in front of them, Yan Liang was encamped with one hundred thousand veterans.

Cao Cao was frightened at the force opposed to him and, returning to camp, spoke to Song Xian, who had once served under Lu Bu, saying, "You are one of Lu Bu's famous veteran generals. Can you give battle to this Yan Liang?"

Song Xian agreed to try. He armed himself, mounted, and rode to the front. Yan Liang was there on horseback, his sword lying crossways. Seeing an opponent approaching, he uttered a loud shout and galloped toward Song Xian. The two met, but after only three bouts, Song Xian fell under a mighty slash from Yan Liang's sword.

"What a terrible leader!" said Cao Cao.

"He has slain my comrade, I want to go and avenge him," then cried Wei Xu.

Cao Cao bade him go, and he rode out, spear set, and in front of the army railed at Yan Liang.

Yan Liang replied not a word, but their two steeds came together; at the first blow from Yan Liang's sword, Wei Xu's forehead was halved.

"Now, who again dares face him?" cried Cao Cao.

Xu Huang took up the challenge and he went out. The combat endured twenty bouts, and then Xu Huang fled back to his own side. The other generals were now greatly depressed at their failure. Cao Cao withdrew his army, feeling very sad at the loss of two generals in quick succession. Yan Liang also marched off his force.

Then, Cheng Yu went to see his chief, saying, "I can produce a man the equal of Yan Liang."

"Who?" cried Cao Cao.

"No other than Guan Yu."

"I am afraid that if he is given an opportunity to perform that return service he spoke of, he will leave me."

"If Liu Bei is still alive, he is with Yuan Shao. If you get Guan Yu to defeat Yuan Shao's army, Yuan Shao will look askance at Liu Bei and put him to death. With Liu Bei gone, where can Guan Yu go?"

This argument appealed to Cao Cao at once, and he sent to request Guan Yu to come.

Prior to obeying the call, Guan Yu went to say farewell to his Sisters-in-law.

"You may get news of the Uncle on the journey," said they.

"Yes," said Guan Yu and left them.

Armed with his Green-Dragon Saber, riding on the swift steed Red Hare, and having but a slender following, Guan Yu was not long in arriving

at Baima. He saw Cao Cao, who told him what had happened: Yan Liang was too valiant for any to face.

“Let me look at him,” said Guan Yu.

Then, wine was served for his refreshment, and while they were drinking, it was reported that Yan Liang had once again offered a challenge. So Cao Cao and his guest and staff went to the summit of a hill whence the enemy could be seen.

Cao Cao and Guan Yu sat on the hilltop, and the commanders stood about them. Cao Cao pointed out Yan Liang’s troops arrayed on the plains below. The ensigns and banners, waving fresh and bright amid the forest of spears and swords, made a grand and imposing spectacle.

“See how formidable these soldiers of the North of Yellow River are,” said Cao Cao.

“I regard them only so much as clay fowls and mud dogs,” said Guan Yu.

Cao Cao pointed out Yan Liang, saying, “There, under that grand umbrella, in that embroidered robe and that silver breastplate and riding on horseback and gripping that huge sword, is Yan Liang.”

“His head looks as though it was stuck on a pole for sale,” said Guan Yu, just glancing over the army at his feet.

“He is very terrible. You must not despise him,” said Cao Cao.

Guan Yu rose, saying, “I am a poor thing, but I will go over and bring you his head if you like.”

“Joking is not allowed in this army,” interposed Zhang Liao. “Please be careful what you say, General.”

Guan Yu quickly mounted, turned down his mighty weapon, and galloped down the hill, his phoenix eyes rounded and his silkworm

eyebrows fiercely bristling. He dashed straight into the enemy's array, and the northern soldiers opened like falling waves and dissolving storms. He made directly for the commander.

Now Yan Liang, sitting there in state, saw a horseman rushing toward him, and just as he began to ask who the rider of the red horse was, lo! the horseman was there. Taken utterly by surprise, the leader could make no defense. Guan Yu's arm rose and the mighty weapon fell. And with it fell Yan Liang.

Leaping from the saddle, Guan Yu cut off his victim's head and hung it on his horse's neck. Then, he mounted and rode out, just as if there were no army there.

The northern troops, panic-stricken, made no fight. Cao Cao's army attacked with full force and slew great numbers of them. They captured many horses and weapons and much military gear. Guan Yu rode quickly back up the hill and laid the proof of his prowess at the feet of the Prime Minister.

"You are more than human, General!" cried Cao Cao.

"What have I done to talk about?" said Guan Yu. "My brother, Zhang Fei, did the same thing in an army of a hundred legions, and did it as easily as picking something from his own pocket."

Cao Cao marveled at the statement and, turning to those about him, said, "If you meet this Zhang Fei, be careful." And he bade them make a note on the overlap of their robes so that they would remember.

The beaten army, returning northward, met Yuan Shao on the road and told their story.

“A red-faced warrior with a long beard, wielding a huge, long-handled sword, broke into the army, cut off the General’s head and bore it off,” said they.

“Who was this?” asked Yuan Shao.

Ju Shou said, “It must have been Liu Bei’s Brother, Guan Yu. It could be nobody else.”

Yuan Shao was very angry and, pointing to Liu Bei, he said, “Your Brother has slain my beloved leader. You are in the plot too. Why should I save you alive?”

He bade the lictors take Liu Bei away and behead him.

Morning saw him guest on high.

Evening, prisoner, doomed to die.

Liu Bei’s actual fate will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VII

CHAPTER 26

YUAN SHAO LOSES ANOTHER LEADER; GUAN YU ABANDONS RANK
AND WEALTH.

As the last chapter closed, Liu Bei had been condemned to die.

Liu Bei spoke up, however, and said, "Pray hear one word, Illustrious Sir, before you decide. I have lost sight of my Brother since my misfortune at Xuzhou and know not whether Guan Yu be dead or alive. There are many men in the world who resemble him. Is every red-faced man with a beard named Guan Yu? Should you not rather seek some evidence?"

Now Yuan Shao was impulsive and facile by nature, and when Liu Bei spoke thus, he suddenly turned upon Ju Shou, saying, "By wrongly regarding what you said, I nearly killed an innocent person."

Then, Yuan Shao requested Liu Bei once more to resume his seat in the tent and give advice on how to avenge Yan Liang.

Soon, from the lower end, a voice was heard, saying, "Yan Liang and I were as brothers, and can I allow any other to avenge his death?"

The speaker was a man of eight-span height with a face like a jilin's, a famous leader from the North of Yellow River named Wen Chou.

Yuan Shao was pleased and said, "You are the only man who can do it. I will give you one hundred thousand troops, and you can cross the Yellow River and quickly smite that rebel, Cao Cao.

"You cannot do it. Wen Chou will fail," said Ju Shou. "The proper course is to hold Yenjin and detach a force to Guandu. If you rashly cross

the river and anything goes wrong, not a soul will return.”

Yuan Shao said, “That is always the way with you fellows, always delaying and taking the dash out of the army. You put off today and postpone tomorrow till success has become impossible. Do you forget that promptitude is what each soldier honors?”

The adviser withdrew sadly, saying, “Superiors do not curb their ambitions, inferiors crave for achievements: things are undone. Eternal is the course of Yellow River; shall I change it?”

Thereafter, Ju Shou feigned illness and went no more to the council.

Liu Bei said, “I have received much kindness at your hands and have been unable to show my gratitude. I would accompany General Wen Chou that I may repay your bounty and also that I may hear news of my Brother.”

Yuan Shao gladly consented and ordered Wen Chou to share his command with Liu Bei.

But the former objected, saying, “Liu Bei has been so often defeated that it will augur ill for success this time. Since you wish, I will give Liu Bei command of the rear guard of thirty thousand soldiers.”

And this being approved, three legions were sent under Liu Bei’s special command to follow the main body.

The prowess displayed by Guan Yu in the bold attack on Yan Liang redoubled Cao Cao’s respect for him, and Cao Cao petitioned the Throne that Guan Yu receive the title of Lord of Hanshou, and a seal was cast for him.

Just then came the unexpected news that Yuan Shao's army had moved toward the Yellow River and was in position above Yenjin. Cao Cao first sent to transfer the inhabitants to the west bank and then led out an army to oppose Yuan Shao.

He issued an order to face about, thus placing the rear companies in front. The commissariat wagons were also placed in the van.

"What is this reversal for?" asked Lu Qian.

Cao Cao replied, "When the supplies are in the rear, they are liable to be plundered. So I have put them first."

"But if you meet the enemy and they steal them...?"

"Wait till the enemy appears: I shall know what to do."

Lu Qian was much exercised at this new move of the Prime Minister. In the meantime, the supply train moved along the river toward Yenjin. Presently, the foremost troops raised a great shout, and Cao Cao sent to see what it meant.

The messenger came back, saying, "Wen Chou's army is approaching, and the supply train has been abandoned and is at the mercy of the enemy. The main body is still far behind. What are we to do next?"

Thereupon, Cao Cao pointed to two mounds, saying, "We will take refuge here for the present."

All those near him hastened to the mounds. There, Cao Cao ordered them all to loosen their dress, lay aside their breastplates, and rest for a time. The horsemen turned their steeds loose.

Wen Chou's soldiers approached under cover. As they drew near, the officers told Cao Cao, saying, "The rebels are near. We ought to catch the horses and go back to Baima."

But Adviser Xun You checked them, saying, "These are a bait for the enemy. Why retire?"

Cao Cao glanced across at him and said, "He understands. Do not say anything."

Now, having gotten possession of the supply carts, the enemy next came to seize the horses. By this time, they had all broken ranks and were scattered, each soldier going his own way. Then suddenly, Cao Cao gave the order to go down from the mounds and smite them.

The surprise was complete. Wen Chou's army was in confusion, and Cao Cao's army surrounded them. Wen Chou made a stand, but those about him trampled each other down, and he could do nothing but flee. And he fled.

Then, standing on the top of a mound, Cao Cao pointed to the flying leader, calling out, "There is one of the most famous generals of the north. Who can capture him?"

Zhang Liao and Xu Huang both mounted and dashed after him, crying, "Wen Chou, do not run away!"

Looking round, the fugitive saw two pursuers, and then he set aside his spear, took his bow, and adjusted an arrow, which he shot at Zhang Liao.

"Cease shooting, you rebel!" shouted Xu Huang.

Zhang Liao ducked his head, and the shaft went harmlessly by, save that it carried away the tassel of his cap. He only pressed harder in pursuit. The next arrow however struck his horse in the head, and the animal stumbled and fell, throwing its rider to the earth.

Then, Wen Chou turned to come back. Xu Huang, whirling his battleax, stood in his way to stop Wen Chou. But Xu Huang saw behind

Wen Chou several more horsemen coming to help, and as they would have been too many for him, he fled.

Wen Chou pursued along the river bank. Suddenly, he saw, coming toward him with banners fluttering in the breeze, a small party of horsemen whose leader carried a great sword.

“Stop!” cried Guan Yu, for it was he, and he attacked at once.

At the third bout, Wen Chou’s heart failed him, and he wheeled and fled, following the windings of the river. But Guan Yu’s steed was fast and soon caught up. One blow, and the hapless Wen Chou fell.

When Cao Cao saw from the mound that the leader of the enemy had fallen, he gave the signal for a general onset, and half of the northern army was drowned in the river; the carts with supplies and all the horses were quickly recovered.

Now, Guan Yu, at the head of a few horsemen, was thrusting here and striking there at the moment when Liu Bei, with the thirty thousand reserve troops, appeared on the battlefield on the other bank of the river. At once, they told him that the red-faced, long-bearded warrior was there and had slain Wen Chou. Liu Bei hastily pressed forward to try to get a look at the warrior. He saw across the river a body of cavalry, and the banners bore the words “Guan Yu, Lord of Hanshou.”

“Then it is my brother, and he is really with Cao Cao,” said Liu Bei, secretly thanking God that Guan Yu was safe.

Liu Bei made an attempt to wait about till he could call to Guan Yu, but a great mass of Cao Cao’s soldiers came rushing down, and he was forced to retire.

Yuan Shao, bringing reinforcements, reached Guandu and built a stockade.

Two advisers, Guo Tu and Shen Pei, went in to see him and said, “Again, that fellow Guan Yu was in battle. He killed Wen Chou. Liu Bei pretends ignorance of him.”

Their master was angry and railed at Liu Bei, “The long-eared rebel! How dare he do such a thing?”

Soon, Liu Bei appeared. Again, Yuan Shao ordered him out to instant execution.

“What crime have I committed?” asked Liu Bei.

“You sent your Brother to slay one of my generals. Is that no crime?”

“Pray let me explain before I die. Cao Cao hated me and has always done so. Now, he has found out where I am and, fearing that I may help you, has got my Brother to destroy your two generals, feeling sure that when you heard of it, you would be angry and put me to death. You cannot fail to see this.”

“What he says makes sense,” said Yuan Shao, turning to his advisers, “and you two nearly brought on me the reproach of injuring the good.”

Yuan Shao ordered his attendants to retire and asked Liu Bei to come and sit by him.

Liu Bei came, saying, “I am deeply thankful, Illustrious Sir, for your great kindness, for which I can never be sufficiently grateful. Now, I desire to send a confidential messenger with a secret letter to my Brother to tell him where I am, and I am sure he will come without a moment’s delay. He will help you to destroy Cao Cao to make up for having destroyed your two officers. Do you approve of this?”

“If I got Guan Yu, he would be ten times better than the Yan Liang and Wen Chou that I have lost,” replied Yuan Shao.

So Liu Bei prepared a letter. But there was no one to take it. Yuan Shao ordered the army to withdraw to Wuyang, where they made a large camp. For some time, nothing was done.

Cao Cao sent Xiahou Dun to defend the strategic points at Guandu, while he led the bulk of the army back to the capital. There, he gave many banquets in honor of the services of Guan Yu, and then he told Lu Qian that putting the supplies in the front of the army had been meant as a bait to draw the enemy to destruction.

“Only Xun You understood that,” said Cao Cao in conclusion.

Everyone present praised his ingenuity. Even while the banquet was proceeding, there arrived news of a rising of Yellow Scarves rebels at Runan led by Liu Pi and Gong Du. They were very strong, and Cao Hong had been defeated in several engagements. Now he begged for help.

Guan Yu, hearing this, said, “I should like to have the opportunity to perform a service by destroying these rebels.”

“You have already rendered noble services for which you have not been properly requited. I could hardly trouble you again,” said Cao Cao.

“I have been idle too long. I shall get ill,” said Guan Yu.

Cao Cao then let him to go and gave him fifty thousand troops, with Yu Jin and Yue Jin as generals under him. They were to leave soon.

Then, Xun Yu said privily to his master, “He always cherishes the idea of returning to Liu Bei. He will leave you if he hears any news. Do not let

him go on this expedition.”

“If he does well this time, I will not let him go into battle again,” said Cao Cao.

In due time, the force led by Guan Yu drew near the rebels in Runan and made their camp. One night, just outside his camp, two spies were caught and taken in to Guan Yu, who in one of them recognized Sun Qian.

The attendants being dismissed, Guan Yu questioned Sun Qian. “Since we lost sight of each other, I have heard not a word of you. What are you doing here?” said Guan Yu.

“After I escaped, I drifted hither and thither till I had the good fortune to reach Runan, and Liu Pi and Gong Du, the Yellow Scarves leaders, took me in. But why are you with Cao Cao, General? And where are your Sisters-in-law? Are they well?”

Guan Yu told him all that had happened.

Then, said Sun Qian, “I have heard lately that Liu Bei is with Yuan Shao. I would have liked to go and join him, but I have not found a convenient opportunity. Now, the two men I am with have taken the side of Yuan Shao against Cao Cao. By good luck, you were coming here, so I got command of a small party of scouts to be able to see you and tell you. Presently, our two leaders will pretend to be defeated, and you and the two ladies can go over to Yuan Shao. And you will see your Brother.”

“Since he is there, I certainly must go at once to see him. But it is a misfortune that I have slain two of Yuan Shao’s generals. I fear things are not in my favor,” said Guan Yu.

“Let me go first and see how the land lies. I will come back and tell you.”

“I would risk a myriad deaths to see my Brother,” said Guan Yu. “But I must go to say farewell to Cao Cao.”

Sun Qian was sent away that night, and next day Guan Yu led out his army to offer battle. Gong Du, in armor, went out to the front of the line of battle, and Guan Yu said, “You people, why have you risen against the government?”

“Why do you blame us when you have turned your back on your own lord?” replied Gong Du.

“How have I turned my back on my lord?”

“Liu Bei is with Yuan Shao, and you are with Cao Cao. What is that?”

Guan Yu could not reply, but he whirled round his sword and rode forward. Gong Du fled, and Guan Yu followed. Gong Du turned and said to Guan Yu, “Do not forget your old chief’s kindness. Now, attack as soon as you can, and I will give up the defense.”

Guan Yu understood and urged on his troops. The leaders of the rebels pretended they were worsted, and they all scattered. So Runan was retaken. Having pacified the people, Guan Yu quickly led his army back to the capital, where he was met by Cao Cao and congratulated on his success and feasted.

When this was all over, Guan Yu went to the dwelling of his Sisters-in-law to pay his respects at their gate.

“Have you been able to get any news of Uncle Liu Bei on your two expeditions?” asked Lady Gan.

“None,” replied Guan Yu.

As he retired from the door, he heard sounds of bitter weeping within.

“Alas! He is dead,” said they. “Our Brother-in-law thinks we shall be greatly distressed, and thus, he hides the truth from us.”

One of the old soldiers, who acted as guard, hearing the sounds of perpetual grief, took pity on them and said, “Do not weep, ladies. Your lord is with Yuan Shao in the North of Yellow River.”

“How do you know that?” said they.

“I went out with General Guan Yu, and one of the soldiers told me.”

The two ladies summoned Guan Yu and reproached him, saying, “Uncle Liu Bei never betrayed you, and yet you remain here, enjoying the bounty of Cao Cao and forgetting the old times. And you tell us falsehoods.”

Guan Yu bowed his head, saying, “My brother really is in the North of Yellow River, but I dared not tell you, lest it should become known. Something must be done, but done carefully, and it needs time.”

“Brother-in-law, you should hasten,” said Lady Gan.

Guan Yu withdrew, feeling that he must evolve some scheme of departure without further loss of time. It caused him much uneasiness.

Yu Jin, having found out that Liu Bei was in the north, told Cao Cao, who at once sent Zhang Liao to find out Guan Yu’s intentions.

Zhang Liao entered jauntily and congratulated Guan Yu, saying, “They tell me you obtained news of your Brother on the battlefield. I felicitate you.”

“My lord was there indeed, but I met him not. I see nothing to be glad about.”

“Is there any difference between the relationship of you two and that of any other two brothers?”

Guan Yu replied, “You and I stand in the relationship of friends. Liu Bei and I are friends and brothers beside, and prince and minister in addition to both. Our relationship cannot be discussed in usual terms.”

“Well, now that you know where your Brother is, will you go to him?”

“How can I go back on what I said before? I am sure you will explain fully to the Prime Minister.”

Zhang Liao went back and told his master, who said, “I must find a way to keep him here.”

While Guan Yu was pondering over his difficulties, they told him that a friend had come to inquire for him. The visitor was introduced, but Guan Yu did not recognize him.

“Who are you?” asked Guan Yu.

“I am Chen Zhen of Nanyang, in the service of Yuan Shao.”

In great perturbation, Guan Yu sent away the attendants and, they being gone, said, “There is some special reason for your visit?”

In reply, Chen Zhen drew out a letter and handed it to his host, who recognized that it was from his Brother Liu Bei. The letter read:

“I, the writer, and you, Sir, pledged ourselves in the Peach Garden to die together. Why, then, are we apart and yet alive, our kindly feelings destroyed, our sense of right outraged? If you desire to obtain fame and acquire riches and honor, I will offer my head without

hesitation so that your achievement is fulfilled. More might be said, but I await your commands with great anxiety.”

Guan Yu finished the letter with a bitter cry. “I always wanted to find my Brother, but I did not know where he was. How can he think such evil of me?” said he.

“Liu Bei looks for you very eagerly. If you are still bound by the old pledge, you should go quickly,” said Chen Zhen.

“Anyone born into the world without the essential virtue of sincerity is no true human. I came here openly and can go in no other way. Now will I write a letter, which I will ask you to bear to my Brother, that as soon as I can take leave of Cao Cao, I will bring the ladies and come to him.”

“But what if Cao Cao refuses to let you go?” said Chen Zhen.

“Then would I rather die. I will not remain here.”

“Then, Sir, quickly write your letter and relieve your Brother from his anxiety.”

So Guan Yu wrote like this:

“I, the humble one, know full well that a human of principle does not betray and a human of loyalty despises death. I was a student in my youth and know somewhat of the proprieties. I sigh and weep at the memory of the fraternal affection that made Yangjue Ai and Zuo Botao die rather than separate. I was in charge of Xiapi, but the place lacked provision and there was no help. I would have fought to the death, but there was on my shoulders the responsibility for my Sisters-in-law. Wherefore, I had to take care of my body lest I betrayed your trust. And so I made a prisoner of myself, hoping to find a way of release.

“I heard of you recently in Runan. I must, however, bid farewell to Cao Cao and bring the ladies with me when I come. May I perish, victim to the superhuman powers, if I have harbored any traitorous thought. Ink and paper are poor substitutes for what I would say, but I look to see you soon.”

Chen Zhen left with this missive, and Guan Yu went to tell the women. Then, he proceeded to the Prime Minister’s palace to say farewell. But Cao Cao knew what he was coming for, and at the gate Guan Yu found the board intimating that no one could be received. So he had to return. However, he bade his own few soldiers prepare to start at any moment. He also gave orders that everything received from Cao Cao was to be left in the quarters. Nothing was to be taken.

Next day, he again proceeded to the palace to say farewell to his patron, but again found the board hanging there to show there was no admission. So it was several times; he could never enter. Then, he went to see Zhang Liao, but Zhang Liao was indisposed.

“This means Cao Cao will not let me go,” thought Guan Yu. “But I am going, and I shall hesitate no longer.”

So he wrote this letter:

“As a young man, I entered the service of the Imperial Uncle, and pledged myself to share his fortunes. Heaven and Earth witnessed this Oath. When I lost the city, I made three requests, which you granted. Now, I hear my Brother is with Yuan Shao, and I, remembering our pledge, cannot but go to him. Though your bounty is great, I forget not the bond of the past; wherefore, I write this letter of farewell, trusting that when you have read it, you will be content for me to postpone to another season the proof of my gratitude.”

Guan Yu sealed and sent it to the palace. Then, he deposited in the treasury of his dwelling all the gold and silver he had received, hung his seal of lordship of Hanshou in the middle of the reception hall, and left, taking his Sisters-in-law with him in a carriage. He rode Red Hare and carried the Green-Dragon Saber in his hand. With a small escort of guards, those formerly under his command, he left the city by the north gate.

The wardens would have stopped him, but Guan Yu frightened them with a fierce shout. Having gotten out, he told the escort to go in front with the carriage while he would remain behind to guard against pursuit. So they pushed the carriage toward the high road.

In the city, Guan Yu's letter reached the Prime Minister while he was consulting about what to do. He read it and exclaimed, "So he has left!"

Then, the warden of the gate came to report that Guan Yu had forced his way out, and was gone with a carriage, a horse, and a score of guards. Next came the servants from his house to report that he had left, taking nothing of the treasure nor any one of the waiting maids; everything was left in the house. Even his seal was there. His only escort were the few soldiers of his original force.

Suddenly, from the assembly of officers rose a voice, saying, "With three thousand mailed horsemen, I will bring him back alive."

Their eyes turned to the speaker, who was General Cai Yang.

On the dragon's cave he turns his back,

But numberless wolves infest his track.

What came of this offer to pursue will be seen in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VII

CHAPTER 27

THE MAN OF BEAUTIFUL BEARD RIDES ON A SOLITARY JOURNEY; GUAN
YU SLAYS SIX GENERALS THROUGH FIVE PASSES.

Now of all the officers in Cao Cao's army, the two friendly toward Guan Yu were Zhang Liao and Xu Huang. The others treated Guan Yu with respect, except Cai Yang, who was decidedly inimical. So this Cai Yang was ready to pursue and capture Guan Yu as soon as he heard of his departure. But Cao Cao accepted Guan Yu's going as natural.

"He does not forget his old leader, and he was perfectly open in all his actions. He is a gentleman, and you would do well to follow his example," said Cao Cao.

So Cao Cao bade the would-be pursuer be gone and say no more about pursuit.

"You were exceedingly good to Guan Yu," said Cheng Yu, "but he went off very rudely. He certainly left a screed behind with his reasons, but he affronted you, and that is no light matter. Now to let him join Yuan Shao is to add wings to a tiger. You had better catch him and put him to death so as to guard against future evil."

Cao Cao replied, "But he had my promise, and can I break my word? Each has his master. Do not pursue." But Cao Cao said to Zhang Liao, "He has rejected all I gave him, so bribes were powerless with him in whatever shape. I have the greatest respect for such as him. He has not yet gone far, and I will try to strengthen his attachment to me and make an appeal to sentiment. Ride after him and beg him to stop till I can come up and bid

farewell and offer him a sum of money for his expenses and a fighting robe, that he may remember me kindly in later days.”

So Zhang Liao rode out quite alone. Cao Cao followed him leisurely with an escort of a score or so.

Now the steed that Guan Yu rode was Red Hare, and it was very fast. No one could have caught up with him but that there was the ladies’ carriage to escort, and so Red Hare had to be held in and go slow.

Suddenly, Guan Yu heard a shout behind him, a voice crying, “Go slowly, Guan Yu!”

He turned and made out the person to be Zhang Liao. Ordering the pushers of the carriage to press on along the high road, he reined in his steed, held his Green-Dragon Saber ready for a stroke, and waited for Zhang Liao to come up.

“Of course, you have come to take me back, Zhang Liao?” said Guan Yu.

“No. The Prime Minister, seeing that you are going a long journey, wishes to see you on your way and told me to hasten forward and beg you to wait till he can catch up. That is the only thing.”

“Seeing that he is coming along with mailed men, I shall fight to the very last,” said Guan Yu. And he took up his position on a bridge, where he waited the approach of the party, who advanced quickly.

Four of Cao Cao’s generals—Xu Chu, Xu Huang, Yu Jin, and Li Dian—followed close. Seeing Guan Yu was ready to fight, Cao Cao ordered his escort to open out in two lines, and then it was seen they carried no arms. This relieved his mind, for it proved to Guan Yu they meant no attack.

“Why do you go in such haste, Guan Yu?” asked Cao Cao.

Guan Yu inclined his head but did not dismount, saying, “I informed you in writing that since my lord was in the North of Yellow River, I had to leave at once. I went to your palace again and again but was refused admittance. So I wrote a letter of farewell, sealed up the treasure, resigned my lordship seal, and left everything for you. I hope you recall the promise you once made me.”

Cao Cao replied, “My desire is to keep my troth with all people. I cannot go back on my word. However, you may find the journey expensive, and therefore, I have here prepared a sum of money to help you.” Then, from horseback Cao Cao held out a packet of gold.

Guan Yu said, “I have sufficient left from your former bounty. Keep that for presents to your soldiers.”

“Why should you refuse this? It is but an insignificant return for great services.”

“My services have been all trifling, not worth mentioning.”

“Really, Guan Yu, you are the most high-principled of humans. I am very sorry my luck is too poor to retain you at my side. Pray accept just this robe to show you I am not quite ungrateful,” said Cao Cao.

And one of his generals, dismounting, held up a silken coat in both hands. Guan Yu even still fearful of what might happen, would not dismount, but he reached down his sword and took the robe on its point. Then, he threw it over his shoulders and turned to thank the giver.

“I thank you, Sir Prime Minister, for the robe and trust we shall meet again.” So saying, Guan Yu went down from the bridge and bore away to the north.

“He is a very rude man,” said Xu Chu, who was of the escort. “Why do you not take him prisoner?”

Cao Cao replied, “He was absolutely alone facing scores of us. He was justified in being suspicious. But my word has gone forth, and he is not to be pursued.”

Cao Cao and his escort returned, the Prime Minister very sad when he thought of the man who had gone.

Guan Yu went down from the bridge and started in the wake of the carriage carrying the two ladies, which should have gone about ten miles while this interview had been going on. He could see no signs of it and rode hither and thither looking on all sides.

Presently, he heard someone shouting from a hill, calling him by name to halt. He saw a youth wearing a yellow turban and dressed in a silk robe. He held a spear in his hand and was mounted on a horse from the neck of which dangled a bloody head. Behind him were a hundred or so men on foot, and they advanced quickly.

“Who are you?” asked Guan Yu.

The young man dropped his spear, dismounted, and made a low bow. Guan Yu feared this was some ruse, so he only checked his horse and gripped his sword more firmly, saying, “Sir, I desire you to tell me your name!”

“My name is Liao Hua. I belong to a Xiangyang family. Since these troubled times began, I have been an outlaw among the rivers and lakes, and I and my comrades have lived by plunder. We are about five hundred in all. By chance, my friend Du Yuan came across two ladies in a carriage just

now, and quite wrongly, he took them prisoners and brought them to the hold in the hills. I questioned the servants and so found out who they were and who was escorting them. So I wished them to be set free to pursue their journey. Du Yuan opposed this and spoke so ill-mannerly that I killed him. And here is his head. I pray you pardon me.”

“Where are the two ladies?”

“They are among the hills,” replied Liao Hua.

“Bring them down here, at once,” said Guan Yu.

In a short time a party of the brigands pushed the carriage down the hill, and the ladies sat there before him.

Then Guan Yu dismounted, laid aside his sword, and stood respectfully before them with his arms crossed.

“Sisters, have you been alarmed?” asked he.

They replied, “We would have suffered at the hands of Du Yuan had it not been for Liao Hua.”

“How did Liao Hua come to save the ladies?” asked Guan Yu of those who stood by.

They said, “Du Yuan carried off the ladies and proposed that he and Liao Hua should have one each as wife. But Liao Hua had found out they were of gentle birth and worthy and was for treating them with respect. When Du Yuan disagreed, Liao Hua slew him.”

Hearing this, Guan Yu bowed to Liao Hua and thanked him. Liao Hua then wanted to join himself and his troop to Guan Yu, but Guan Yu, seeing he was a Yellow Scarf, would have nothing to do with him. So Guan Yu simply thanked him for his kindness to the ladies. Liao Hua offered some presents, but these were also declined. So Liao Hua took his leave and presently disappeared into a valley among the hills.

Guan Yu told his Sisters the story of his meeting with Cao Cao and the gift of a robe, and then he urged the carriage on its way. Towards dark, they came to a farm where they would rest. The farmer, an old graybeard, came out to welcome the party and asked who they were. Guan Yu described himself as the Brother of Liu Bei and said his name.

“Surely you are no other than the slayer of Yan Liang and Wen Chou,” said the venerable host.

“That is so,” replied Guan Yu.

“Come in,” said the old man joyfully.

“My two Sisters-in-law are in the carriage,” said Guan Yu. “Will you let your women-folks go out to receive them?”

As Guan Yu remained standing there, the host asked him to be seated, but he would not sit while the women were present and remained standing in a respectful attitude till the old man’s wife had returned and ushered the ladies into the inner apartments. Then, the old man set to the entertainment of his guest in the guest hall. Guan Yu asked his name.

He replied, “I am called Hu Hua. In the days of the Emperor Huan, I was an officer of the court, but I resigned and retired into private life. I have a son, Hu Ban, with Governor Wang Zhi of Yingyang. If you are going that way, General, I would like to send him a letter by you.”

Guan Yu said he would take the letter. Next day, after an early meal, the ladies got into their carriage, the host handed his letter to Guan Yu, and the little party once more took the road. They went toward Luoyang.

Presently, Guan Yu and his party approached a pass known as the Dongling Pass, guarded by Commander Kong Xiu and five hundred soldiers. When

the soldiers saw a carriage being pushed toward the pass, they ran to tell their commander, who came out to accost the travelers.

Guan Yu dismounted and returned the officer's salute, and Kong Xiu said, "Whither are you going?"

"I have left the Prime Minister to go into the North of Yellow River to find my Brother."

"But Yuan Shao is my master's rival. You have authority from him to go thither?"

"I left hurriedly and could not get it."

"If you have no authority, you must wait while I send to request orders."

"To remain while you send and receive an answer will delay me greatly," said Guan Yu.

"I must stand by my instructions. That is the only thing to do," said Kong Xiu.

"Then you refuse to let me pass?"

"If you want to go through, leave the family as a gage."

At this, Guan Yu got very angry and made to cut at the commander on the spot, but Kong Xiu withdrew into the gate and beat the drums for an attack. Thereupon, the soldiers armed themselves, mounted, and came down to oppose the passage, crying, "Dare you go through, eh?"

The carriage was sent off to a safe distance, and then Guan Yu rode at full speed directly at the commander, who set his spear and came to meet him. The two steeds met and the men engaged, but at the first stroke of the Green-Dragon Saber, the commander of the gate fell to the earth, dead. His troops fled.

“Soldiers, do not flee!” cried Guan Yu. “I killed him because I could do no otherwise. I have nothing against you, but I would ask you to tell the Prime Minister how this thing came to pass, that Kong Xiu wished to kill me, and so I slew him in self-defense.”

The soldiers bowed before him, and Guan Yu, with the carriage, passed through the gates and continued their way to Luoyang. But one of the guards of the pass went quickly in advance and informed the Governor of Luoyang, Han Fu, of the slaughter of Kong Xiu. Wherefore, Han Fu assembled his officers to take counsel.

Meng Tan, one of his generals, said, “This Guan Yu must be a fugitive, or he would have a peaceful conduct. Our only course is to stop him, or we shall incur blame.”

“The man is fierce and brave. Remember the fate of Yan Liang and Wen Chou. It seems vain to oppose him by force, and so we must think out some trap for him,” said Han Fu.

“I have a ruse ready,” said Meng Tan. “I will close the gate with thorny blockades, and I will go to fight with him. I will engage and then flee, and you can shoot him from an ambush along the road. If we can get him and his party and send them as prisoners to the capital, we ought to be well-rewarded.”

This course was determined upon, and soon they heard that Guan Yu was approaching. Han Fu strung his bow and filled his quiver with arrows and, with one thousand soldiers, took up position along the pass.

Then, as the party approached, Han Fu said, “Who is the traveler who comes?”

Guan Yu bowed low and said, “He is a certain Guan Yu, Lord of Hanshou, and he wishes to go through the pass.”

“Have you a letter from the Prime Minister?”

“In the hurry of departure, I did not get one.”

“My special orders from him are to hold this pass and make examination of all spies that may go to and fro. Any person without an authority must be a fugitive.”

Then Guan Yu began to get angry, saying, “I have killed Kong Xiu at Dongling Pass. Do you also seek death?”

“Who will capture him for me?” cried Han Fu, and Meng Tan offered himself. He rode out, whirling his double swords, and made straight for Guan Yu.

Guan Yu sent the carriage back out of danger and then rode toward Meng Tan. They engaged, but very soon Meng Tan turned his steed and fled. Guan Yu pursued. Meng Tan, intent only on leading his enemy toward the ambush, took no account of the speed of Red Hare. Very soon Meng Tan was caught up, and a stroke of the mighty sword cut him in two pieces.

Then Guan Yu stopped and turned back. The archers in the gate shot their hardest, and though it was a long way off, one of them lodged an arrow in his left arm. He pulled it out with his teeth, but the blood streamed down as he rode toward Governor Han Fu. The men scattered. Guan Yu rode straight at his next victim. He raised his sword and made an oblique cut, which sliced off the head and shoulder of Han Fu.

Then, Guan Yu drove off the soldiers and returned to escort the carriage. He bound up his wound, and, fearing lest anyone might take advantage of his weakness, he made no long halts on the road but hurried toward River Si Pass.

The warden of River Si Pass was Bian Xi of Bingzhou, a warrior whose weapon was a comet-hammer. He had been a Yellow Scarf and had gone over to Cao Cao, who had given him this post.

As soon as he heard of the coming of the redoubtable Guan Yu, he cudgelled his brains for a ruse to use against him. He decided upon an ambush. In the State Guardian Temple at the pass, he placed two hundred ax-men and swordsmen. He reckoned on enticing Guan Yu to the temple for refreshment, and when he let fall a cup as signal, the hidden ruffians would rush out.

All being thus arranged and ready, he went out to welcome Guan Yu in friendly guise, and Guan Yu dismounted at his coming. Bian Xi began very amiably.

“Your name, General, makes the very earth tremble, and everyone looks up to you. This return to the Imperial Uncle proves you to be noble and true.”

Guan Yu in reply told him the story of the men he had slain in the last two passes.

Bian Xi replied, “You slew them; that is well. When I see the Prime Minister, I will explain to him the inner reasons for these acts.”

Guan Yu thought he had found a friend and so mounted and rode through the pass. When he came to the temple, a number of priests came out to meet him with clanging bells.

This temple, named the State Guardian Temple, had a courtyard in which the Emperor Ming had burned incense in the past. In the temple were thirty priests, and among these, there happened to be one Pu Jing who came from the same village as Guan Yu. His religious name was Transverse

Peace. Hearing who the visitor was, Transverse Peace came forward to speak with him.

“General,” said Transverse Peace, “it is many a long year since you left Pudong.”

“Yes,” said Guan Yu, “nearly twenty years.”

“Do you recognize this poor priest?”

“I left the village many years ago; I do not recognize you.”

“My house and yours were only separated by a rivulet,” said the priest.

Now Bian Xi, seeing Transverse Peace spewing forth about village matters, thought Transverse Peace would blab about the ambush, so Bian Xi bade him be silent. “I want to invite the General to a feast. You priest fellows seem to have a lot to say,” said Bian Xi.

“Not too much,” said Guan Yu. “Naturally, when fellow villagers meet, they talk of old times.”

Bian Xi invited the visitor into the guest room to take tea, but Guan Yu said, “The two ladies are out there in the carriage. They ought to have some first.”

So the priest bade them take some tea to the ladies, and then he led Guan Yu within, at the same time lifting the priest knife which he wore at his side and looking meaningfully at Guan Yu. The latter understood and told his people to bring along his weapon and keep close at his side.

When Bian Xi invited Guan Yu to go into the Hall of the Laws for some refreshment, Guan Yu turned to him, saying, “Is this invitation with good intention or evil?”

Bian Xi was so taken aback that he could make no reply, and then Guan Yu saw that many armed men were concealed behind the arras.

Then, Guan Yu shouted loudly at Bian Xi, saying, “What means this? I thought you an honorable man. How dare you?”

The traitor saw that his plot had failed and called to the assassins to come out and fall to, but Guan Yu had a short sword in his hand and slashed at anyone who came near. So they scattered. Their commander ran down the hall and tried to escape among the side buildings, but Guan Yu threw aside the short sword, took up the Green-Dragon Saber and went after Bian Xi. The latter was trying to get into position to throw his comet-hammer, but Guan Yu cut the cord and the weapon was useless. Guan Yu followed Bian Xi in and out and soon caught up with him. Then, with one blow, Guan Yu cut him in halves.

The fight over, Guan Yu sought the two ladies, who were surrounded by soldiers. These fled at sight of the terrible warrior. Seeking out the priest, his fellow countryman, he thanked him for the timely warning which had saved him from death.

“I cannot remain here after this,” said Transverse Peace. “I shall pack up my few garments and my alms bowl and take to the road, vague in my wanderings as the clouds in the sky. But we shall meet again, and till then, take care of yourself.”

Then, Guan Yu took leave and retook the road to Yingyang.

The Governor of Yingyang was named Wang Zhi, and he was related to Han Fu by their children’s marriage. Hearing of the death of his relative, Wang Zhi set about a scheme to kill Guan Yu secretly. He sent soldiers to guard the city gates and, when he heard that Guan Yu approached, he went

himself and received Guan Yu with a smiling countenance and bade Guan Yu welcome. Guan Yu told him the object of his journey.

“You, General, have been able to get some exercise on the road, but the ladies in their carriage must be cramped and fatigued. I pray you come into the city and all of you remain the night in the official travelers’ quarters. Tomorrow, you can set forth again.”

The offer was tempting, and his host seemed in earnest, so the two ladies went into the city, where they found everything very comfortably prepared for them. And, though Guan Yu declined the Governor’s invitations to a banquet, refreshments for the travelers were sent to their lodgings. Guan Yu was fatigued from the trials of the journey, and as soon as the evening meal was over, he bade the ladies retire to rest while he sat down in the main room, quite alone, for he bade all to get repose while they could. His horse was given a good feed for once. He sat with his armor loosened in order to be more at ease.

Now Governor Wang Zhi had a general named Hu Ban to whom he had entrusted the arrangements for the destruction of his guest.

Said Wang Zhi, “This Guan Yu is a traitor to the Prime Minister and a fugitive. On the road, he has murdered several Pass Commanders and is guilty of serious crimes. But he is too strong and valiant for any ordinary soldier to overcome. So this evening, you will lead a whole company of a thousand troops to surround his lodging, each one armed with a torch, and we will burn him. They will start the fire about midnight. Everyone of the party will perish. I will come with a force to stand by and assist if necessary.”

These orders received, Hu Ban passed them on to the soldiers, who began secretly to prepare dry wood and other combustibles which they piled up at the gate of the rest house. Hu Ban thought within himself that he

would like to know what manner of man was this Guan Yu, whose fame had spread so far, so he determined to get a peep at the guest. He went to the rest house and inquired as to where Guan Yu was.

“The General is the man in the main hall, reading,” was the reply.

Hu Ban noiselessly made his way to the outside of the room and peeped in. He saw the famous warrior stroking his beard with his left hand while he read by the light of a lamp placed on a low table. An involuntary exclamation of wonder escaped at the majesty of the figure.

“Really, a god!” Hu Ban sighed.

“Who is there?” suddenly asked the reader at the sound.

Hu Ban entered and said, “I am Hu Ban, a general of the Governor.”

“Surely you are the son of Hu Hua, who lives outside Xuchang,” said Guan Yu.

“I am he,” replied Hu Ban.

Then, Guan Yu called up his followers and bade them look among the baggage for the letter, which they brought. Guan Yu handed it to the general.

Hu Ban read it and then breathed long, saying, “I very nearly caused the death of a good man.”

Then, he betrayed the whole plot, saying, “This Wang Zhi is a wicked man, who wants to kill you. At this moment, you are surrounded, and at the third watch, they will set fire to this place. Now, I will go and open the city gates while you hastily prepare for flight.”

Guan Yu was greatly surprised, but he quickly buckled up his armor, got his steed ready, roused the two ladies, and put them into their carriage. Then, they left the rest house; as they made their way out, they saw the soldiers all about them, each with a torch. The party hastened to the

outskirts of the city and found the gate already open, and they lost no time in getting clear of the city. Hu Ban returned to give orders to fire the rest house.

The fugitives pressed on. But before long, they saw lights coming up behind them, and Wang Zhi called out to them to stop.

Guan Yu reined in his horse and began to abuse him, crying, "Worthless fellow! What had you against me that you wished to burn me to death?"

Wang Zhi whipped up his steed and set his spear, but Guan Yu cut him through with the short sword he wore at his side and scattered his followers.

Then, the carriage pushed on. Guan Yu's heart was filled with gratitude to Hu Ban.

When the party drew near Huazhou, someone told Liu Yue, who rode out to welcome him. Liu Yue had been once rescued by Guan Yu, who slew Yan Liang and Wen Chou and lifted the siege of the city.

Guan Yu did not dismount but bowed from horseback, saying, "Have you been quite well since we parted?"

"Whither are you going, Sir?" replied Liu Yue.

"I have left the Prime Minister and am on my way to find my Brother."

"Liu Bei is with Yuan Shao, who is at enmity with the Prime Minister. How can you be allowed to go to him?" asked Liu Yue.

"That matter was settled long ago."

"The Yellow River Dock is an important point and is guarded by a commander of Xiahou Dun. He will not let you cross."

“But suppose, then, you provide boats for me?”

“Though there are boats, I dare not give them to you.”

“Well, formerly I slew Yan Liang and Wen Chou and saved you a grave danger. Now, you refuse me a ferry boat!”

“I am afraid Xiahou Dun will know of it and make it a fault against me.”

Guan Yu perceived that no help was to be expected from this man, so he pushed on and presently reached the dock. There, the Commander of the Guard, Qin Qi, came out to question him.

“I am one Guan Yu, Lord of Hanshou.”

“Whither are you bound?”

“I go to the North of Yellow River to seek my Brother, Liu Bei, and I respectfully ask you to grant me a passage over the river.”

“Where is the authority of the Prime Minister?”

“I am not on a mission from the Prime Minister, so why should I have such an authority?”

“I have orders from my chief to guard the dock, and you will not cross. Even if you grew wings, you would not fly over.”

Guan Yu’s choler arose. “Do you know that I have been the death of all those who have hitherto tried to stop me?” said he.

“You have only slain a few officers of no rank or reputation, but you dare not kill me!”

“Where would you stand beside Yan Liang and Wen Chou?” asked Guan Yu.

Qin Qi grew angry, and he loosed his rein. Sword in hand, he came at a gallop. The two met, but in the first encounter, Qin Qi’s head was swept off

by the terrible Green-Dragon Saber.

“He who opposed me is dead! You others need not be afraid,” cried Guan Yu. “Be quick and prepare me a boat.”

The boat was soon at the landing, and the two women stepped on board, followed by Guan Yu. They crossed and were then in the country of Yuan Shao.

In the course of his journey to this point, Guan Yu had forced five passes and slain six generals.



His seal hung up, the treasury locked, his
courtly mansion left,

He journeyed toward his brother dear, too long
from his side left.

The horse he rode was famed for speed as for
endurance great,

His good sword made a way for him and
opened every gate.

His loyalty and truth forth stand, a pattern
unto all,

His valor would frighten rushing streams and
make high mountains fall.

Alone he traveled lustily, this was death to meet
his blade,

He has been themed by myriads, his glory never
will fade.



“I did not willingly slay a single one of them,” mused Guan Yu as he rode along. “There was no help for it. Nevertheless, when Cao Cao hears of it, he will regard me as ungrateful for his bounty.”

Before long, he saw a rider on the road who soon hailed him and proved to be Sun Qian.

“I have not heard a word from you since we lost sight of each other at Runan. How have you fared?” said Guan Yu.

“After your departure, Liu Pi and Gong Du retook the city. I was sent by them to Yuan Shao to try to make peace with him and succeeded, so that Yuan Shao invited Liu Bei to go to him and share in the deliberations for a concerted attack on Cao Cao. But to my disgust, the leaders of Yuan Shao’s army showed great jealousy of each other so that Tian Feng got thrown into jail, Ju Shou was degraded, and others quarreled. Then, Yuan Shao vacillated and hesitated, so that your Brother and I consulted how we might get away from them all.

“Now, the Uncle is at Runan with Liu Pi and, thinking you could not know that and might suffer some harm if you unwillingly went to Yuan Shao, I have come to warn you. It is good fortune to find you like this. Now we can hasten to Runan, and you will meet your Brother.”

Guan Yu took Sun Qian to make his bow to the ladies, who asked after his adventures, and Sun Qian said, “Uncle Liu Bei was nearly executed due to Yuan Shao’s sudden bursts of anger after the deaths of Yan Liang and Wen Chou. Now, however, he is out of his way and safe at Runan, and you will meet him soon.”

The ladies covered their faces and wept at the recital of his dangers. Then, the party no longer traveled north but took the road toward Runan.

Not long after, a great cloud of dust was noticed behind them, and that presently made out a hundred horsemen. These were led by Xiahou Dun, who shouted out to Guan Yu to stop.

One by one the pass commanders stopped his progress and were slain,
The river crossed, another army comes and he must fight again.

How finally Guan Yu escaped death will appear in the succeeding chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VII

CHAPTER 28

PUTTING CAI YANG TO DEATH, THE BROTHERS' DOUBTS DISAPPEAR;
MEETING AT GUCHENG, LORD AND LIEGES FORTIFY EACH OTHER.

Sun Qian had joined Guan Yu in escorting the two ladies, and they were on the road to Runan when Xiahou Dun suddenly determined to pursue. So with a couple hundred cavalymen, Xiahou Dun set out. When Xiahou Dun was seen approaching, Guan Yu bade Sun Qian go ahead with the carriage while he remained to deal with the pursuers.

When they were near enough, Guan Yu said, "In coming after me thus, you do not reinforce the magnanimity of your master!"

Replied Xiahou Dun, "The Prime Minister has sent no definite instructions. You have caused the death of several people, among them one of my commanders, and so I have come to capture you! You have behaved most grossly. The Prime Minister will decide."

Thereupon, Xiahou Dun dashed forward with his spear ready to thrust.

But at that moment, a rider came up behind him at full gallop, crying, "You must not fight with Guan Yu!"

Guan Yu stayed his steed at once and waited.

The messenger came up, drew from his bosom an official letter, and said to Xiahou Dun, "The Prime Minister loves General Guan Yu for his loyalty and honor, and fearing lest Guan Yu might be stopped at the various passes, he sent me with this letter to show when necessary at any point on the road."

“But this Guan Yu has slain several commanders of the passes. Does the Prime Minister know that?” said Xiahou Dun.

The messenger said these things were unknown.

“Then,” said Xiahou Dun, “I will arrest him and take him to the Prime Minister, who may set him free or not as he wills.”

“Do you think I fear anything you can do?” said Guan Yu, getting wrathful.

And he rode forward. Xiahou Dun, nothing loth, set his spear and prepared for battle. They met and had reached the tenth encounter, when a second horseman came up at full speed, crying, “Generals, wait a little!”

Xiahou Dun stayed his hand and asked the messenger, saying, “Am I to arrest him?”

“No,” replied the messenger. “Fearing lest he should have difficulties at the passes, the Prime Minister has sent me with a dispatch to say he is to be released.”

“Did the Prime Minister know that he had slain several commanders on the way?”

“He did not know!”

“Since he was ignorant of that, I may not let this Guan Yu go,” and Xiahou Dun gave the signal to his men to close in round Guan Yu.

But Guan Yu flourished his sword and made to attack them, and a fight was again imminent, when a third rider appeared, who cried, “Guan Yu, give way and do not fight!”

The speaker was Zhang Liao. Both combatants made no further move but awaited his arrival.

Zhang Liao said, “I bring the Prime Minister’s order that, since he has heard that Guan Yu has slain certain commanders on the way, he fears that

some will hinder his passage. Wherefore, he has sent me to deliver his command at each gate that Guan Yu is to be suffered to pass freely.”

Xiahou Dun said, “Qin Qi was the son of Cai Yang’s sister, and he was confided to my especial care. Now, this Guan Yu has killed him, so how can I refrain?”

“When I see his uncle Cai Yang, I will explain. But now, the main point is that you have the Prime Minister’s orders to let Guan Yu pass and you may not despise his wish.”

So the only thing for Xiahou Dun to do was to retire, and he did.

“Whither are you going?” then said Zhang Liao to Guan Yu.

“I fear my Brother is no longer with Yuan Shao, and now I am going to find him wherever he is.”

“As you do not know where to go, why not return to the Prime Minister?”

“Where is the sense of that?” said Guan Yu with a smile. “But, Zhang Liao, you return, and try to arrange pardon for my faults.”

With this, Guan Yu saluted Zhang Liao and took his leave. Zhang Liao retired and joined Xiahou Dun.

Guan Yu quickly regained the carriage, and as they went along side by side, he told Sun Qian what had happened. Several days later, a heavy rainstorm came on which soaked everything. Looking about for protection, they noticed a farm under the shelter of a precipice and took their way thither. An old man came out to them to whom they told their story.

When they had finished, the old fellow said, "My name is Guo Chang, and I have lived here many years. I am very pleased to greet the man whom I have known so long by reputation."

Guo Chang quickly killed a sheep for their refreshment and brought out wine for the two men. The two ladies were entertained in the inner apartments. And while they refreshed themselves, their baggage was put out to dry and their steeds were fed.

As the day closed in, they saw several youths come along, and their host said, "My son has come to pay his respects."

"This is my humble son," said Guo Chang, presenting a lad to Guan Yu.

"What has he been doing?" asked Guan Yu.

"He has just come in from hunting." The young fellow went out. The old man continued, "All my family have been farmers or scholars. He is my only son, and instead of following in the footsteps of his ancestors he cares for nothing but gadding about and hunting, unhappily."

"Why unhappily?" said Guan Yu. "In these days of disorder, a good soldier can make a name for himself."

"If he would only learn the military arts, that would be something of a career. But he is nothing but a vagabond and does everything he should not. He is a grief to me."

Guan Yu sighed in sympathy. The old gentleman stayed till a late hour, and when he took his leave, his two guests began to prepare for rest.

Suddenly, outside, there arose a great hubbub, men shouting and horses neighing. Guan Yu called to his people, but as no one answered, he and Sun Qian drew their swords and went into the stable yard. There, they found their host's son on the ground, shouting to his followers to fight.

Guan Yu asked what it was all about, and his guards told him, “The young fellow had tried to steal Red Hare but had been badly kicked. We heard shouting and went to see what it meant, when his men had set on us.”

Guan Yu was very wrathful. “You mean thieves! Would you steal my horse?” cried he.

But before he could do anything, his host came running out, saying, “It was not with my consent that my son did this evil thing. I know he is very guilty and deserves death. But his mother loves him tenderly, and I pray you be generous and pardon him!”

“Really, he is unworthy of his father,” said Guan Yu. “What you told me shows he is a degenerate. For your sake, I pardon him.”

Then, Guan Yu told his own people to keep a better lookout, sent the people about their business and, in company with Sun Qian, went away to rest.

Next morning, both the host and hostess were up betimes, waiting to thank Guan Yu for forgiving their son’s mad freak.

“My son has insulted your tiger dignity, I know, and I am deeply affected by your kindness in not punishing him,” said the old man.

“Bring him here, and I will talk to him,” said Guan Yu.

“He went out before daylight with a lot of his fellow rogues, and I know not where he is.”

So Guan Yu bade them farewell, got the ladies into their carriage, and they moved out of the farmyard, Guan Yu and Sun Qian riding abreast as escort. They took the road toward the hills.

Before the party had gone far, they saw a large party of men, led by a couple of riders, pouring down one of the gullies. One of the riders wore a yellow turban and a battle robe. The other was Guo Chang's son.

The wearer of the turban called out, saying, "I am one of the commanders of Zhang Jue the Lord of Heaven. Whoever you may be, leave that horse you are riding for me. You may then go free!"

Guan Yu greeted the speech with a hearty laugh. "O you mad ignoramus! If you had ever been with Zhang Jue as a bandit, you would have learned to know Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei, the Three Brothers."

"I have heard of the ruddy long-beard called Guan Yu, but I have never seen him. Who may you be?"

Guan Yu then laid aside his sword, stopped his horse, and drew off the bag that covered his beard, thus showing its magnificence.

The turban-wearer immediately slipped out of the saddle, laid an angry hand on his companion, and they both bowed low in front of Guan Yu's steed.

"Who are you?" asked Guan Yu.

"I am Pei Yuanshao. After the death of Zhang Jue, I was left forlorn, and I got together a few others like myself, and we took refuge in the forests. Early this morning, this fellow came to tell us that a guest at his father's farm had a valuable horse and proposed to me to steal it. I did not think I would meet you, General."

Guo Chang's wretched son implored that his life might be spared, and Guan Yu pardoned him for his father's sake. Then, Guan Yu covered his face and crept away.

“You did not recognize me. How, then, did you know my name?” asked Guan Yu.

Pei Yuanshao replied, “Not far from here is a mountain called the Sleeping Bull, where lives a certain Zhou Cang, a very powerful man who came from the west. He has a stiff, curly beard and looks very handsome. He also was a commander in the rebel army, who took to the forest when his leader perished. He has told me a lot about you, but I have never had the happiness of seeing you.”

Said Guan Yu, “Under the greenwood trees is no place for a hero’s foot. You had better abandon this depraved life and return to the path of virtue. Do not work out your own destruction.”

As they were talking, a troop of horsemen appeared in the distance. They belonged to Zhou Cang, as Pei Yuanshao said, and Guan Yu waited for them to approach. The leader was very dark-complexioned, tall, and armed with a spear.

As soon as he drew near enough to see, he exclaimed joyfully, “This is General Guan Yu!” In a moment, he had slipped out of the saddle and was on his knees by the roadside. “Zhou Cang renders obeisance,” said he.

Said Guan Yu, “O Warrior, where have you known me?”

“I was one of the Yellow Scarves, and I saw you then. My one regret was that I could not join you. Now that my good fortune has brought me here, I hope you will not reject me. Let me be one of your footsoldiers to be always near you to carry your whip and run by your stirrup. I will cheerfully die for you.”

As he seemed thoroughly in earnest, Guan Yu said, “But if you follow me, what of your companions?”

“They may do as they please: follow me or go their ways.”

Thereupon, they all shouted, "We will follow!"

Guan Yu dismounted and went to ask the ladies what they thought of this.

Lady Gan replied, "Brother-in-law, you have traveled thus far alone and without fighters; you have safely passed many dangers and never wanted their assistance. You refused the service of Liao Hua; why, then, suffer this crowd? But this is only my view, and you must decide."

"What you say, Sister-in-law, is to the point."

Therefore, returning to Zhou Cang, he said, "It is not that I am lacking in gratitude, but my Sisters-in-law do not care for a large following. Wherefore, return to the mountains till I shall have found my Brother, when I will surely call you."

Zhou Cang replied, "I am only a rough, uncouth fellow, wasting his life as a brigand. Meeting you, General, is like seeing the full sun in the skies, and I feel that I can never bear to miss you again. As it might be inconvenient for all my people to follow you, I will bid my companion lead them away, but I will come and follow you on foot wherever you go."

Guan Yu again asked his Sisters-in-law what they thought of this. Lady Gan said one or two made no difference, and so Guan Yu consented. But Pei Yuanshao was not satisfied with this arrangement and said he wished also to follow.

Zhou Cang said, "If you do not stay with the band, they will disperse and be lost. You must take command for the moment and let me accompany General Guan Yu. As soon as he has a fixed abode, I will come to fetch you."

Somewhat discontentedly, Pei Yuanshao accepted the situation and marched off, while his one-time colleague joined the train of Guan Yu, and

they went toward Runan.

Guan Yu and his escort traveled quickly for some days, until they saw a city on a hill.

The natives told them, "This city is called Gucheng. A few months before, a warrior suddenly appeared, drove out the magistrate, and took possession. Then, he began to recruit soldiers, bought up horses, and laid in stores. The warrior's name is Zhang Fei. Now, he has a large force, and no one in the neighborhood dare face him."

"To think that I would find my Brother like this!" said Guan Yu, delighted. "I have heard nary a word of him, nor knew I where he was, since Xuzhou fell."

So Guan Yu dispatched Sun Qian into the city to tell its new commander to come out to meet him and provide for their Sisters-in-law.

Now, after being separated from his Brothers, Zhang Fei had gone to the Mangdang Hills, where he had remained a month or so while he sent far and near for tidings of Liu Bei. Then as he happened to pass Gucheng, he had sent in to borrow some grain, but had been refused. In revenge, he had driven away the magistrate and taken possession of the city. He found the place well-suited to his needs at the moment.

As directed by Guan Yu, Sun Qian entered the city and, after the usual ceremonies, told Zhang Fei the news, "Liu Bei has left Yuan Shao and gone to Runan, and Guan Yu, with your Sisters-in-law, is at the gates. He wishes you to go out and receive them."

Zhang Fei listened without a word till he came to the request to go out to meet his Brother. At that point, he called for his armor and, when he had

put it on, laid hold of his long Serpent Halberd, mounted, and rode out with a large company at his back. Sun Qian was too astonished to ask what this meant and simply followed.

Guan Yu was very glad when he saw his Brother coming, put up his weapons and, with Zhou Cang at his back, rode toward him at full speed. But as Guan Yu approached, he saw all the signs of fierce anger on Zhang Fei's face, and Zhang Fei roared as he shook his spear, threatening Guan Yu.

Guan Yu was entirely taken aback and called out anxiously, "Brother, what does this mean? Is the Peach Garden Pledge quite forgotten?"

"What impudence is this that you come to see me after your disgraceful behavior?" shouted Zhang Fei.

"What disgraceful behavior has been mine?" said Guan Yu.

"You have betrayed your Brother, you have surrendered to Cao Cao, and you have received title and office at his hands. And now, you are come to exploit me. One of us shall die!"

Guan Yu said, "Really, you do not understand, and it is hard for me to explain. But ask the two ladies here, worthy Brother, and they will tell you."

At this, the ladies lifted the curtain of the carriage and called out, "Brother, why is this?"

Zhang Fei said, "Wait awhile, Sisters, and see me slay this traitor. After that, I will conduct you into the city."

Said Lady Gan, "Since he knew not where you were, our Brother took shelter with Cao Cao. And since he knew that his elder Brother was at Runan, he has braved every danger to escort us thus far on the road. Pray take a correct view of his conduct."

Lady Mi also chimed in, "When your Brother went to Xuchang, no other course was open to him."

"Sisters, do not let him deceive you to the truth. Real loyalty prefers death to dishonor. No good person can serve two masters."

Guan Yu said, "Brother, cease to wrench me, I pray you."

Sun Qian said, "Guan Yu came expressly to seek you."

"How much more nonsense will you talk?" roared Zhang Fei. "How can he be true-hearted? He came to capture me, I say."

"Had I come to capture you, I would have come with troops and horses," said Guan Yu.

"And are there not troops and horses?" said Zhang Fei, pointing to a point behind Guan Yu.

Guan Yu turned, and there, he saw a cloud of dust rising as though a squadron of horse was coming. And soon they were near enough, and from their trumpets and banners, they showed themselves to be of Cao Cao's army.

"Now will you try to cajole me further?" cried Zhang Fei in a rage.

He set his Serpent Halberd and was just coming on, when Guan Yu said, "Brother, wait a while. See me slay the leader of these, that I may prove myself no traitor."

"Well, if you are really true, prove it by slaying that leader, whoever he may be, before I have finished three rolls of the drum."

Zhang Fei's condition was accepted. Soon, the attacking force was near enough to make out the leader to be Cai Yang.

Sword in hand, Cai Yang rode at full speed, crying, "So I have found you, slayer of my nephew! I have a command to capture you and will execute it."

Guan Yu made no reply. Raising his sword ready to strike, he moved out, and the drums began to beat. Before a roll could be completed, the fight was over, and Cai Yang's head had rolled on the ground. His force scattered and fled. Guan Yu, however, captured the young ensign-bearer and questioned him.

The youth said, "The fact is the Prime Minister had not given an order. Incensed at the loss of his nephew, Cai Yang wished to cross the river to pursue and attack you, General, although the Prime Minister refused permission. To satisfy him, the Prime Minister had sent Cai Yang to attack Runan, and the meeting at this place is entirely an accident."

Guan Yu bade him repeat this story to his Brother. Zhang Fei also questioned him concerning all that had happened in the capital, and the recital of the whole story satisfied Zhang Fei of the fidelity of Guan Yu.

Just then, messengers came from the city to Zhang Fei to say: "Some scores of horsemen have arrived at the south gate. They seem in a great hurry, but no one knows them."

Zhang Fei, with still a lingering doubt in his mind, went to look at the newcomers and there saw some forty mounted archers with light bows and short arrows. Hastily dismounting to see them better, he found they were led by Mi Zhu and Mi Fang.

Quickly slipping out of their saddles, they came over, and Mi Zhu said, "After the dispersal at Xuzhou when we lost sight of you, we returned to our village, whence we sent all around for news of you. We heard that Guan Yu had surrendered to Cao Cao and our lord was in the North of Yellow River with Yuan Shao. The one of whom we could hear nothing was yourself. But yesterday, while on our way, we fell in with some travelers who told us a certain General Zhang Fei, of such and such an appearance,

had suddenly occupied Gucheng, and we felt it must be you. So we came to inquire, and we happily fell in with you here.”

Zhang Fei replied, “Guan Yu and Sun Qian are here, and my two Sisters are with them. They had heard where my elder Brother was.”

This news added to the joy of the two newcomers, who went to see Guan Yu and the women, and then they all entered the city. When the ladies had settled down a little, they related the whole story of their adventures on the road, at which Zhang Fei was overcome with remorse and bowed before his Brother, bitterly weeping. Mi Zhu and Mi Fang were greatly affected. Then, Zhang Fei related what had happened to him.

A day was spent in banquets, and next day, Zhang Fei wished his newly-found Brother to go with him to Runan to see their elder Brother, Liu Bei.

But Guan Yu said, “No. you take care of the ladies here while Sun Qian and I go to get news.”

So Guan Yu and Sun Qian with a small escort set out. When they reached Runan, they were received by Liu Pi.

“Liu Bei is no longer in the city. After waiting some days, he has come to the conclusion that the soldiers are too few, and has gone back to Yuan Shao to consult with him,” said Liu Pi.

Guan Yu was greatly disappointed, and Sun Qian did his best to console him, saying, “Do not be sorrowful. It only means the trouble of another journey into the North of Yellow River to tell Uncle Liu Bei, and then we can all meet at Gucheng.”

So spoke Sun Qian, and Guan Yu accepted it. They took leave of Liu Pi and returned to Gucheng, where they related what had happened.

Zhang Fei wanted to go with them into the North of Yellow River, but Guan Yu opposed this, saying, "Seeing you have this city, it makes a rallying point for us and a resting place. We must not abandon it lightly. Sun Qian and I will go; while away, we look to you to keep the city safe."

"How can you go after killing the two generals, Yan Liang and Wen Chou?"

"That will not stop me. After I am there, I can act according to circumstances."

Then, Guan Yu summoned Zhou Cang and asked him, saying, "How many followers are there with Pei Yuanshao at Sleeping Bull Mountain?"

"I should think, four or five hundred."

"Now," said Guan Yu, "I am going to take the shortest road to find my Brother. Can you go to summon your army and lead them along the high road to assist me?"

With instructions to bring up this force, Zhou Cang left, while Guan Yu, Sun Qian, and their small escort went off to the north.

When they drew near the boundary, Sun Qian said, "You must be careful how you go over. You ought to stop here while I go in, see Uncle Liu Bei, and take the necessary steps."

Seeing the wisdom of this, Guan Yu stopped there and sent his companion in advance, he and his followers going up to a nearby farm as an abiding place.

When they got to the farm, out came a venerable man leaning on a staff. After exchanging salutes, Guan Yu told the old man all about himself.

"My family name is also Guan, my personal name being Ding," said the old man. "I know your reputation, and I am very happy to meet you."

Guan Ding sent for his two sons to come and make their bow. He put up Guan Yu in his house and provided for his escort in the farm buildings.

In the meantime, Sun Qian had made his way to Jizhou City and told Liu Bei the whole story.

Liu Bei said, "Jian Yong is also here. We will send for him secretly to talk over this matter."

They did so, and when the usual salutes had been exchanged, they three began to consider the means of getting away.

"My lord," said Jian Yong, "you see Yuan Shao personally and say you wish to go to Jingzhou to see Liu Biao about a scheme for the destruction of Cao Cao. That will give an excuse."

"That seems best," said Liu Bei, "but will you go with me?"

"I have another plan to extricate myself," said Jian Yong.

Having settled their plans, Liu Bei soon went in to see his protector and suggested, "Liu Biao is strong and well-posted. His help should be sought against our enemy."

"I have sent messengers repeatedly to ask his help," said Yuan Shao, "but he is unwilling."

"As he and I are of the same family, he will not refuse me if I go and ask him," said Liu Bei.

"Certainly, he is worth much more than Liu Pi. You shall go."

"I have just heard," Yuan Shao continued, "that Guan Yu has left Cao Cao and wants to come here. If he does, I will put him to death out of revenge for my two beloved generals, Yan Liang and Wen Chou."

“Illustrious Sir, you wished to employ him, and so I sent for him. Now, you threaten to put him to death. The two men he slew were but deer compared with a tiger such as he is. When you exchange a couple of deer for a tiger, you need not complain about the bargain.”

“Really, I like him,” said Yuan Shao. “I was only joking. You can send another messenger for him and tell him to come soon.”

“May I send Sun Qian for him?”

“Certainly.”

After Liu Bei had gone, Jian Yong came in and said to Yuan Shao, “If Liu Bei goes, he will not come back. I had better go to speak to Liu Biao. And I can keep a watch on Liu Bei.”

Yuan Shao agreed and issued orders for both to go.

On the subject of the mission, Guo Tu came in to his chief to dissuade him. Said Guo Tu, “Liu Bei went to speak to Liu Pi, but he accomplished nothing. Now, you are sending Jian Yong with him, and I am sure neither will ever return.”

“Do not be too suspicious,” said Yuan Shao. “Jian Yong is clever enough.”

That was the end of the conference.

Forthwith, Liu Bei sent Sun Qian back to Guan Yu and then, with Jian Yong, took leave of Yuan Shao and rode out of the city. As soon as they reached the border line, they met Sun Qian, and all three rode off to Guan Ding’s farm to meet Guan Yu. He came out to welcome them, bowed, and then seized his Brother’s hands while tears streamed down his face.

Presently, the two sons of their host came to bow to the visitors. Liu Bei asked their names.

“These are of the same name as myself,” said Guan Yu. “The sons are Guan Neng, who is a student, and Guan Ping, who is to be a soldier.”

“I have been thinking of sending the younger in your train, General,” said old Guan Ding. “Would you take him?”

“What is his age?” said Liu Bei.

“He is eighteen.”

Liu Bei said, “Since, O Senior, you are so kind, I venture to suggest that your son should be adopted by my Brother, who has no son of his own. What think you of that?”

Guan Ding was perfectly willing, so he called Guan Ping and bade him make a son’s obeisance to Guan Yu and to style Liu Bei “Uncle.”

Then, it was time to get on their way, lest they should be pursued, and with Guan Yu went Guan Ping. Guan Ding and Guan Neng escorted them a long distance and then returned.

The party took the road to Sleeping Bull Mountain. Before they had gone very far, they met Zhou Cang with a small party. He was wounded. He was introduced to Liu Bei, who asked him how it was.

He replied, “Before I reached the hill, a certain lone warrior had fought with my friend Pei Yuanshao and killed him. Then, many of our troops surrendered to him, and he occupied our old camp. When I reached it, I tried to allure the soldiers back to my side but only succeeded with a few.

The others were too afraid. I got angry and engaged the interloper, who worsted me time after time, however, and wounded me thrice.”

“Who is the warrior? What does he look like?” asked Liu Bei.

“All I know he is a doughty fighter; I do not know his name.”

Thereafter, they advanced toward the hill, with Guan Yu in front and Liu Bei in rear. When they drew near, Zhou Cang began to abuse his enemy, who soon appeared, mailed and armed, coming down the hill like a tornado.

Suddenly, Liu Bei rode out waving his whip and shouting, “O Zhao Yun, I am here to look for you!”

Indeed, the rider was Zhao Yun. He instantly slipped out of the saddle and bowed by the roadside.

Liu Bei dismounted to talk with him and ask how he came to be there.

“When I left you, I had no idea that Gongsun Zan was a man who would listen to no reason. The result was disaster, and he perished in the flames. Yuan Shao invited me to him several times, but I thought too little of him to go. Then, I wanted to go to Xuzhou to you, but you had lost that place, Guan Yu had gone over to Cao Cao, and you had joined Yuan Shao. Several times I thought of coming to you, but I feared Yuan Shao. So I drifted from one place to another, with nowhere to rest till I happened to come this way and Pei Yuanshao tried to steal my horse. So I slew him and took possession of his camp. I heard Zhang Fei was in Gucheng but thought it might be only a rumor. And so the days have passed till this happy meeting.”

Liu Bei told Zhao Yun all that had happened to him since they parted, and so did Guan Yu.

Said Liu Bei, “The first time I saw you, I felt drawn to you and did not want to part from you. I am very happy to meet you again.”

“In all my wanderings, trying to find a lord worth serving, I have seen no one like you. Now, I have reached your side: that is enough for all my life. I care not what may happen to me.”

Next, they burned the camp on Sleeping Bull Mountain, after which they all took the road back to Gucheng, where they were welcomed. They exchanged the stories of their many adventures, and the two ladies related the valiant deeds of Guan Yu, whereat Liu Bei was too affected to speak.

Then, they performed a great sacrifice to Heaven and Earth with the slaughter of a bull and a horse.

The soldiers also were recompensed for their toils. Liu Bei surveyed the conditions around him and found therein much to rejoice at. His two Brothers were restored to his side, and none of his helpers were missing. Moreover, he had gained Zhao Yun, and Guan Yu had acquired an adopted son, Guan Ping. Another commander had joined his ranks in the person of Zhou Cang. There was every occasion for feasting and gratification.



Scattered wide were the brothers, none knew another's
retreat,
Joyfully now they foregather, dragon and tigers meet.



At this time, the forces under the command of Liu Bei, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun, Sun Qian, Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, Guan Ping, and Zhou Cang numbered four or five thousand soldiers.

Liu Bei was in favor of leaving Gucheng and occupying Runan, and just then Liu Pi and Gong Du, the commanders of that city, sent to invite

him to go there. So they went. There, they devoted all their efforts to strengthen their army, both horse and foot.

Yuan Shao was much annoyed when Liu Bei did not return and at first was for sending a force after him. However, Guo Tu dissuaded him.

“Liu Bei need cause you no anxiety. Cao Cao is your one enemy and must be destroyed. Even Liu Biao, though strongly posted on River Han, is none too terrible. There is Sun Ce on the southeast of the Great River, strong, feared, with wide domain of six territories, a large army, and able counselors and leaders; you should make an alliance there against Cao Cao.”

Guo Tu won his chief to his view and wrote to Sun Ce, sending the letter by Chen Zhen.

Just as one warrior leaves the north,
Another from the east comes forth.

Future chapters will reveal the outcome of these dispositions.



END OF ACT VII

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT VIII:

MISGIVINGS AND LOST CHANCES:
THE FINAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE
YUANS

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VIII

CHAPTER 29

THE YOUTHFUL CHIEF OF THE SOUTH SLAYS YU JI; THE GREEN-EYED
BOY LAYS HOLD ON THE SOUTH LAND.

Sun Ce gradually became supreme on the southeast of the Great River. In the fourth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 199), he took Lujiang by the defeat of the Governor Liu Xu. He dispatched Yu Fan with a dispatch to Governor Hua Xin of Yuzhang, and Hua Xin surrendered. Thence, Sun Ce's renown increased, and he boldly sent a memorial on his military successes to the Emperor by the hand of Zhang Hong.

Cao Cao saw in Sun Ce a powerful rival and said, "He is a lion, difficult to contend with."

So Cao Cao betrothed his niece, daughter of Cao Ren, to Sun Kuang, the youngest brother of Sun Ce, thus connecting the two families by marriage. Cao Cao also retained Zhang Hong near him in the capital.

Then, Sun Ce sought the title of Grand Commander, one of the highest offices of state, but Cao Cao prevented the attainment of this ambition, and Sun Ce keenly resented it. Henceforward, his thoughts turned toward an attack on Cao Cao.

About this time the Governor of Wujun, Xu Gong, sent a secret letter to the capital to Cao Cao, saying:

“Sun Ce is a turbulent fellow of the Xiang Yu type. The government ought, under the appearance of showing favor to him, to recall him to the capital, for he is a danger in the southern regions.”

But the bearer of this letter was captured on the Great River and sent to Sun Ce, who immediately put him to death. Then, Sun Ce treacherously sent to ask the author of the letter to come and consult over some affair. The unsuspecting Xu Gong came.

Sun Ce produced the letter, saying, “So you wish to send me to the land of the dead, eh?”

And thereupon the executioners came in and strangled Xu Gong. The family of the victim scattered, but three of his clients determined to avenge him, if only they could find some means of attacking Sun Ce.

One day, Sun Ce went hunting in the hills to the west of Dantu. A stag was startled, and Sun Ce pressed after it at topmost speed and followed it deep into the forest.

Presently, he came upon three armed men standing among the trees. Rather surprised to see them there, he reined in and asked who they were.

“We belong to Han Dang’s army and are shooting deer,” was the reply.

So Sun Ce shook his bridle to proceed. But just as he did so, one of the men thrust at him with a spear and wounded his thigh. Sun Ce drew the sword at his side, dashed forward, and tried to cut down the aggressor. The blade of his sword suddenly fell to the ground, only the hilt remaining in his hand. Then, one of the assassins drew his bow, and an arrow wounded Sun Ce in the cheek. Sun Ce plucked out the arrow and shot at the offender, who fell, but the other two attacked him furiously with their spears, shouting, “We are Xu Gong’s men and his avengers!”

Sun Ce then understood. But he had no weapons save his bow to use against them. He tried to draw off, keeping them at bay by striking with his bow. But the fight was getting too much for him, and both he and his steed were wounded in several places.

However, just at the critical moment, Cheng Pu and some of his own officers came up, and they minced the assassins into pieces.

But their lord was in a sorry plight. His face was streaming with blood, and some of the wounds were very severe. They tore up his robe and therewith bound up his wounds, and they carried him home.



A poem in praise of the three avengers says:

O Sun Ce was a warrior and a stranger he to fear.
But he was basely murdered while hunting of the deer.
Yet were they leal who slew him, to avenge a
murdered lord.
Self-immolated like Yu Rang, they dreaded not the
sword.



Badly wounded, Sun Ce was borne to his home. They sent to call the famous physician Hua Tuo, but he was far away and could not be found. However, a disciple of his came, and the wounded man was committed to his care.

“The arrowheads were poisoned,” said the physician, “and the poison has penetrated deep. It will take a hundred days of perfect repose before

danger will be past. But if you give way to passion or anger, the wounds will not heal.”

Sun Ce’s temperament was hasty and impatient, and the prospect of such a slow recovery was very distasteful. However, he remained quiet for some twenty of the hundred days. Then, came Zhang Hong from the capital, and Sun Ce insisted on seeing and questioning him.

“Cao Cao fears you, my lord, very greatly,” said Zhang Hong, “and his advisers have exceeding respect for you—all except Guo Jia.”

“What did Guo Jia say?” asked the sick chieftain.

Zhang Hong remained silent, which only irritated his master and caused him to demand to be told. So Zhang Hong had to speak the truth.

He said, “The fact is Guo Jia told Cao Cao that he needed not fear you, that you were frivolous and unready, impulsive and shallow, just a stupid swaggerer who would one day come to his death at the hands of some mean person.”

This provoked the sick man beyond endurance. “The fool! How dare he say this of me?” cried Sun Ce. “I will take Xuchang from Cao Cao, I swear.”

It was no more a question of repose. Ill as he was, he wanted to begin preparations for an expedition at once. They remonstrated with him, reminded him of the physician’s orders, and urged him to rest.

“You are risking your priceless self in a moment’s anger,” said Zhang Zhao.

Then arrived Chen Zhen, the messenger from Yuan Shao, and Sun Ce had him brought in.

He said, “My master wishes to ally himself with the South Land in an attack on Cao Cao.”

Such a proposal was just after Sun Ce's heart. At once, he called a great meeting of his officers in the wall tower and prepared a banquet in honor of the messenger. While this was in progress, Sun Ce noticed many of his officers whispering to each other, and they all began to go down from the banquet chamber. He could not understand this and inquired of the attendants near him what it meant.

They told him, "Saint Yu Ji has just gone by, and the officers have gone down to pay their respects to him."

Sun Ce rose from his place and went and leaned over the railing to look at the man. He saw a Daoist priest in snowy garb leaning on his staff in the middle of the road, while the crowd about him burnt incense and made obeisance.

"What wizard-fellow is this? Bring him here!" said Sun Ce.

"This is Yu Ji," said the attendants. "He lives in the east and goes to and fro, distributing charms and draughts. He has cured many people as everybody will tell you, and they say he is a saint. He must not be profaned."

This only angered Sun Ce the more, and he told them to arrest the man at once or disobey at their peril. So, there being no help for it, they went down into the road and hustled the saint up the steps.

"You madman! How dare you incite people to evil?" said Sun Ce.

"I am but a poor priest of the Langye Mountains. More than half a century ago, when gathering simples in the woods, I found near the Yangqu Spring a book called *The Way of Peace*. It contains a hundred and more chapters and taught me how to cure the diseases of humans. With this in my possession, I had only one thing to do: to devote myself to spreading its

teachings and saving humankind. I have never taken anything from the people. Can you say I incite people to evil deeds?”

“You say you take nothing; whence came your clothes and your food? The fact is you are one of the Yellow Scarves, and you will work mischief if you are left alive.”

Then turning to his attendants, Sun Ce ordered, “Take him away and put him to death.”

Zhang Zhao interceded, “The Daoist Saint has been here in the east these many years. He has never done any harm and does not deserve death or punishment.”

“I tell you I will kill these wizard-fellows just as I would cattle.”

The officials in a body interceded, even the guest of honor, Chen Zhen, but in vain. Sun Ce refused to be placated. He ordered Yu Ji to be imprisoned.

The banquet came to an end, and Chen Zhen retired to his lodging. Sun Ce also returned to his palace.

His treatment of the Daoist Holy Man was the theme of general conversation and soon reached the ears of his mother.

Lady Wu sent for her son to come to the ladies’ apartments and said to him, “They tell me you have put Saint Yu Ji in bonds. He has cured many sick people, and the common folk hold him in great reverence. Do not harm him!”

“He is simply a wizard who upsets the multitude with his spells and craft. He must be put to death,” replied Sun Ce.

Lady Wu entreated him to stay his hand, but he was obstinate. "Do not heed the gossip of the streets, Mother," said he. "I must be judge of these matters."

However, Sun Ce sent to the prison for Yu Ji in order to interrogate him. Now the jailers, having a great respect for Yu Ji and faith in his powers, were very indulgent to him and did not keep him in a collar. However, when Sun Ce sent for him, they put on him collar and fetters, all complete.

Sun Ce had heard of their indulgence and punished the jailers and ordered the prisoner thereafter to be put in constant torture. Zhang Zhao and many others, moved by pity, made a petition which they humbly presented, and they offered to become surety for him.

Sun Ce said to them, "Gentlemen, you are all great scholars, but why do you not understand reason? Formerly, in Jiaozhou, was Imperial Protector Zhang Jing, who was deluded by these vicious doctrines into beating drums, twanging lyres, burning incense, and such things. He wore a red turban and presented himself as able to ensure victory to an army. But he was slain by the enemy. There is nothing in all this, only none of you will see it. I am going to put this fellow to death in order to stop the spread of this pernicious doctrine."

Lu Fan interposed, saying, "I know very well this Yu Ji can control the weather. It is very dry just now; why not make him pray for rain as an amercement?"

"We will see what sort of witchcraft he is equal to," said Sun Ce.

Thereupon, he had the prisoner brought in, loosed his fetters, and sent him up to an altar to intercede for rain.

The docile Daoist Yu Ji prepared to do as he was bidden. He first bathed himself, then dressed himself in clean garments. After that, he bound his limbs with a cord and lay down in the fierce heat of the sun. The people came in crowds to look on.

Said Yu Ji, "I will pray for three spans high of refreshing rain for the benefit of the people; nevertheless, I shall not escape death thereby."

The people said, "But if your prayer be efficacious, our lord must believe in your powers."

"The day of fate has come for me, and there is no escape."

Presently, Sun Ce came near the altar and announced that if rain had not fallen by noon, he would burn the priest. And to confirm this, he bade them prepare the pyre.

As it neared noon, a strong wind sprang up, and the clouds gathered from all quarters. But there was no rain.

"It is near noon," said Sun Ce. "Clouds are of no account without rain. He is only an impostor."

Sun Ce bade his attendants lay the priest on the pyre, pile wood around him, and apply the torch. Fanned by the gale, the flames rose rapidly. Then appeared in the sky above a wreath of black vapor, followed by roaring thunder and vivid lightning, peal upon peal and flash upon flash. And the rain fell in a perfect deluge. In a short time, the streets became rivers and torrents. It was, indeed, a three-span fall.

Yu Ji, who was still lying upon the pile of firewood, cried in a loud voice, "O Clouds, cease thy rain, and let the glorious sun appear!"

Thereupon, officials and people helped the priest down, loosened the cord that bound him, and bowed before him in gratitude for the rain.

But Sun Ce boiled with rage at seeing his officers and the people gathered in groups and kneeling in the water regardless of the damage to their clothing.

“Rain or shine are as nature appoints them, and the wizard has happened to hit upon a moment of change. What are you making all this fuss about?” cried he.

Then, he drew his sword and told the attendants to smite the Daoist Saint therewith. They all besought him to stay his hand.

“You want to follow Yu Ji in rebellion, I suppose,” cried Sun Ce.

The officers, now thoroughly cowed by the rage of their lord, were silent and showed no opposition when the executioners seized the Daoist Saint and beheaded him.

As the head fell, they saw just a wreath of black smoke drift away to the northeast, where lay the Langye Mountains.

The corpse was exposed in the marketplace as a warning to enchanters and wizards and such people. That night, there came a very violent storm, and when it calmed down at daylight, there was no trace of the body of Yu Ji. The guards reported this, and Sun Ce in his wrath sentenced them to death. But as he did so, he saw Yu Ji calmly walking toward him as if the Daoist Saint were still alive. Sun Ce drew his sword and darted forward to strike at the wraith, but he fainted and fell to the ground.

They carried him to his chamber, and in a short time he recovered consciousness.

His mother, Lady Wu, came to visit him and said, “My son, you have done wrong to slay the holy one, and this is your retribution.”

“Mother, when I was a boy, I went with Father to wars, where people are cut down as one cuts reed stalks. There is not much retribution about such doings. I have put this fellow to death and so checked a great evil. Where does retribution come in?”

“This comes of want of faith,” she replied. “Now you must avert the evil by meritorious deeds.”

“My fate depends on Heaven. Wizards can do me no harm, so why avert anything?”

His mother saw that it was useless to try persuasion, but she told his attendants to do some good deeds secretly whereby the evil should be turned aside.

That night, about the third watch, as Sun Ce lay in his chamber, he suddenly felt a chill breeze, which seemed to extinguish the lamps for a moment, although they soon brightened again, and he saw in the lamplight the form of Yu Ji standing near his bed.

Sun Ce said, “I am the sworn foe of witchcraft, and I will purge the world of all such as deal in magic. You are a spirit, and how dare you approach me?”

Reaching down a sword that hung at the head of his bed, he hurled it at the phantom, which then disappeared. When his mother heard this story, her grief redoubled. Sun Ce, ill as he was, went to see his mother and did his utmost to reassure her.

She said, “Confucius the Teacher says: ‘How abundantly do spiritual beings display the powers that belong to them!’ and ‘Prayer has been made to the spirits of the upper and lower worlds.’

“You must have faith. You sinned in putting Saint Yu Ji to death, and retribution is certain. I have already sent to have sacrifices performed at the

Jade Pure Monastery, and you should go in person to pray. May all come right!”

Sun Ce could not withstand such a mandate from his mother so, mustering all his strength, he managed to get into a sedan chair and went to the monastery, where the Daoists received him respectfully and begged him to light the incense. He did so, but he returned no thanks. To the surprise of all, the smoke from the brazier, instead of floating upwards and dissipating, collected in a mass that gradually shaped itself into an umbrella, and there on the top sat Yu Ji.

Sun Ce simply spat abuse and went out of the temple. As he passed the gates, lo! Yu Ji stood there, gazing at him with angry eyes.

“Do you see that wizard-fellow?” said he to those about him.

They said they saw nothing. More angry than ever, he flung his sword at the figure by the gate. The sword struck one of his escorts, who fell. Sun Ce told them to bury the man. But as he went out of the courtyard, he saw Yu Ji walking in.

“This temple is nothing more than a lurking place for sorcerers and wizards and such people,” said Sun Ce.

Whereupon, he took a seat in front of the building and sent for five hundred soldiers to pull the place down. When they went up on the roof to strip off the tiles, Sun Ce saw Yu Ji standing on the main beam, flicking tiles to the ground. More angry than ever, Sun Ce told them to drive out the priests belonging to the place and burn it. They did so, and when the flames rose their highest, Sun Ce saw the dead Daoist Yu Ji standing in the midst of the fire.

Sun Ce returned home still in a bad humor, which increased when he saw the form of Yu Ji standing at his gate. He would not enter but mustered

his army and went into camp outside the city walls. And there he summoned his officers to meet him and talk over joining Yuan Shao in an attack on Cao Cao.

They assembled, but they remonstrated with him and begged him to consider his precious health. That night, he slept in the camp and again saw Yu Ji, this time with his hair hanging loose. Sun Ce raged at the vision without cessation.

Next day, his mother called him into the city and he went. She was shocked at the change in his appearance: he looked so utterly miserable. Her tears fell.

“My son,” said Lady Wu, “how wasted you are!”

He had a mirror brought and looked at himself. He was indeed so gaunt and thin that he was almost frightened and exclaimed, “How do I come to look so haggard?”

While he spoke, Yu Ji appeared in the mirror. He struck it and shrieked. Then, the half-healed wounds reopened, and he fainted.

He was raised and borne within. When he recovered consciousness, he said, “This is the end. I shall die.”

He sent for Zhang Zhao, his other chief officers, and his brother Sun Quan, and they gathered in his chamber.

He gave them his dying charge, saying, “In the disordered state of the empire, the domains of Wu and Yue, with its strong defense of the three rivers and resourceful lands, has a brilliant future. You, Zhang Zhao, must assist my brother.”

So saying Sun Ce handed his seal to Sun Quan, saying, “For manipulating the might of Wu, so as to make it the deciding force among the factions, and then obtaining the whole empire, you are not so suited as I.

But in encouraging the wise and confiding in the able and getting the best out of everyone for the preservation of this land, I should not succeed as you will. Remember with what toil and labor your father and I have won what we possess, and take good care thereof."

Sun Quan wept as he knelt to receive the seal, and the dying Sun Ce turned to his mother, saying, "Mother, the days allotted of Heaven have run out, and I can no longer serve my tender mother. I have given over the seal to my brother and trust that you will advise him early and late, and see that he lives worthy of his predecessors."

"Alas! Your brother is full young for such a task," said his mother, weeping. "I know not what may happen."

"He is far abler than I and fully equal to the task of ruling. Should he have doubts upon internal affairs, he must turn to Zhang Zhao; for outer matters, he must consult Zhou Yu. It is a pity Zhou Yu is absent so that I cannot give him my charge face to face."

To his other brothers, Sun Ce said, "When I am gone, you must help your brother. Should any discord arise in the family, let the others punish the wrongdoer and let not his ashes mingle with those of his ancestors in the family vaults."

The young men wept at these words.

Then, he called for his wife, Lady Qiao, and said, "Unhappily, we have to part while still in the full vigor of life. You must care for my mother. Your sister will come to see you presently, and you can ask her to tell her husband, Zhou Yu, to help my brother in all things and make my brother keep to the way I have taught him to walk in."

Then, Sun Ce closed his eyes and, soon after, passed away. He was only twenty-six.



People called him first of the chieftains,
The east had felt his might.
He watched like a tiger crouching,
Struck as a hawk in flight.
There was peace in the lands he ruled.
His fame ran with the wind.
But he died and left to another
The great scheme in his mind.



As his brother breathed his last, Sun Quan sank by the bed and wept.

“This is not the time to mourn,” said Zhang Zhao. “First, see to the funeral ceremonies and that the government is safe.”

So the new ruler dried his tears. The superintendence of the funeral was confided to Sun Jing, and then Zhang Zhao led his young master to the hall to receive the felicitations of his officers.

Sun Quan was endowed with a square jaw and a large mouth; he had green eyes and a purple beard.

Formerly, when Minister Liu Wan had gone to Wu to visit the Sun family, he said of the family of brothers, “I have looked well at them all, and they are all clever and perspicacious, but none of them have the very ultimate degree of good fortune. Only the second, Sun Quan, has the look

of a deep thinker. His face is remarkable, and his build unusual, and he has the look of one who will come to great honor.”

When Sun Quan succeeded his brother and his brother’s might, there was still some reorganization to be done. Soon, Zhou Yu had arrived at Wujun.

The young ruler received him very graciously and said, “I need have no anxiety, now that you have come.”

Zhou Yu had been sent to hold Baqiu. When he heard that his chief had been wounded, he thought it well to return to see how he was. But Sun Ce had died before Zhou Yu could arrive. He hurried to be present at the funeral.

When Zhou Yu went to wail at the coffin of his late chief, Lady Wu, the dead man’s mother, came out to deliver her son’s last injunctions.

When she had told him the last charge, Zhou Yu bowed to the earth, saying, “I shall exert the puny powers I have in your service as long as I live.”

Shortly after, Sun Quan came in, and after receiving Zhou Yu’s obeisance, said, “I trust you will not forget my brother’s charge to you.”

Zhou Yu bowed, saying, “I would willingly suffer any form of death for you.”

“How best can I maintain this great charge which I have inherited from my father and brother?”

“He who wins people, prospers; he who loses them, fails. Your present plan should be to seek people of high aims and farseeing views, and you can establish yourself firmly.”

“My brother bade me consult Zhang Zhao for internal administration, and yourself on external matters,” said Sun Quan.

“Zhang Zhao is wise and understanding and equal to such a task. I am devoid of talent and fear to take such responsibility, but I venture to recommend to you as a helper one Lu Su, a man of Linhuai. This man’s bosom hides strategy, and his breast conceals tactics. He lost his father in early life and has been a perfectly filial son to his mother. His family is rich and renowned for charity to the needy.

“When I was stationed at Juchao, I led some hundreds of soldiers across Linhuai. We were short of grain. Hearing that the Lu family had two granaries there, each holding three thousand carts, I went to ask for help. Lu Su pointed to one granary and said, ‘Take that as a gift.’ Such was his generosity!

“He has always been fond of fencing and horse archery. He was living in Que. His grandmother died while he was there, and he went to bury her in Dongcheng, and then his friend, Liu Ziyang, wished to engage him to go to Chaohu and join Zheng Bao. However, he hesitated about that and has not gone yet. You should invite him without loss of time.”

Sun Quan at once sent Zhou Yu to engage the services of this man, and Zhou Yu set out. When the obeisance was over, Zhou Yu laid before Lu Su the inducements that his own master held out.

Lu Su replied, “I have been engaged by Liu Ziyang to go to Chaohu, and I am just starting thither.”

Said Zhou Yu, “Of-old Ma Yuan said to Liu Xiu, ‘This is an age when not only do princes select their ministers, but ministers must also choose their princes.’ Now our General Sun Quan calls to him the wise and treats his officers well. Thus, he engages the help of the wonderful and gets the services of the extraordinary in a way that few others do. But if you are not engaged elsewhere, come with me to the South Land, as would be the best thing to do.”

Lu Su returned with Zhou Yu and saw Sun Quan, who treated him with the greatest deference and with him discussed affairs very fully. The conference proved so interesting that it went on all day and neither felt fatigue.

One day, at the close of the usual reception, Sun Quan kept Lu Su to dine with him. They sat up late and, by and by, slept on the same couch as would the closest of friends.

In the dead of night, Sun Quan said to his bedfellow, "The dynasty is failing, and everything is at sixes and sevens. I have received a great charge from my father and brother, and I am thinking of imitating the actions of the celebrated Protectors of Reign, Wen and Huan, and becoming the leader of the feudal lords, and I pray you instruct me."

Lu Su replied, "Of old the Founder of Han, the Supreme Ancestor, wished to honor and serve Emperor Yi of Qin, but could not on account of Xiang Yu's evil-doings. Now Cao Cao can be compared with Xiang Yu; how can you be the protector of the Emperor? My humble opinion is that the Hans have fallen beyond hope of recovery and Cao Cao cannot be destroyed, and that the only key to your big schemes is to secure your present position in order to keep the master hand and control the combinations among the others. Now, take advantage of the turmoil in the north to smite Huang Zu and attack Liu Biao in Jingzhou. Thereby, you will command the whole length of the Great River. Then you may consolidate the empire and become the Son of Heaven. This was how the Supreme Ancestor acted."

Hearing this, Sun Quan was very greatly pleased. He threw on some clothing, got up, and thanked his newly-found adviser. Next day, Sun Quan gave Lu Su costly gifts and sent robes and silks to his mother.

Lu Su then recommended a friend of his to Sun Quan's notice, a man of wide reading and great ability. He was also a filial son. His name was Zhuge Jin, and he came from Nanyang. Sun Quan treated Zhuge Jin as a superior guest. This man dissuaded Sun Quan from making common cause with Yuan Shao, but advised him rather to favor Cao Cao, against whom he could plan when occasion served. Sun Quan therefore sent back the messenger Chen Zhen with dispatches that broke off all negotiations.

Hearing of Sun Ce's death, Cao Cao was for sending an expedition against the south.

But Zhang Hong dissuaded him, saying, "It would be mean to take advantage of the period of mourning. And if you should not overcome him, you will make him an enemy instead of being a friend. It would be preferable to treat him generously."

So Cao Cao petitioned the Throne and obtained for Sun Quan the titles of General and Governor of Kuaiji, while Zhang Hong was appointed Commander under Sun Quan.

A seal of office was sent to Sun Quan by Zhang Hong. The new appointment pleased Sun Quan, and he was greatly glad to get Zhang Hong back again. Then, Zhang Hong was sent to act jointly with Zhang Zhao in the administration.

Zhang Hong was the means of getting another into Sun Quan's service. His friend was Gu Yong, a disciple of the Historian Cai Yong. Gu Yong was a man of few words and an abstainer from wine. He was very correct in all things. Sun Quan appointed Gu Yong as Deputy Governor.

Henceforward, Sun Quan's rule was very prosperous, and he waxed mightily in influence and won the love of all the people.

When Chen Zhen returned and related the events in the South Land and told of the honors that Cao Cao had obtained for Sun Quan in return for his support, Yuan Shao was very wroth, and he set about preparing for an attack on Xuchang with a force of seven hundred thousand northern soldiers.

Although in the south they rest from war,
They rattle the spears beneath the northern star.

Later, it will be seen which side conquered.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VIII

CHAPTER 30

SHUNNING ADVICE, YUAN SHAO LOSES LEADERS AND GRANARIES;
USING STRATEGY, CAO CAO SCORES VICTORY AT GUANDU.

Hearing that Yuan Shao was hastening to attack at Guandu, Xiahou Dun wrote to the capital urgently asking for reinforcements, and Cao Cao told off seventy thousand troops, with whom he marched. Xun Yu was left to guard the capital.

Just as Yuan Shao's army was starting off, Tian Feng sent out a remonstrance from his prison cell, saying, "My lord, a hasty attack in full scale will bring disaster to our army. It is best now to wait upon such times as Heaven will appoint."

Peng Ji said to Yuan Shao, "Why does this Tian Feng utter ill-omened words? My lord is sending forth an army in the cause of humanity and justice."

Easily moved to anger, Yuan Shao was going to execute Tian Feng, but this time he forbore at the entreaties of many of his officers. However, he was not appeased, for he said, "I will punish Tian Feng when I return from conquering Cao Cao."

Meanwhile, Yuan Shao hastened to start. The banners of his camp filled the horizon, swords as trees in the forest. They marched to Yangwu and there made a strong camp.

Then, Ju Shou once more opposed any hasty movement, saying, “Though our soldiers are many, they are not so bold as the enemy. However, veterans as are the enemy, they have not ample supplies. Therefore, they will wish to force on a speedy battle, while our policy is to hold them off and delay. If we can keep from a decisive battle long enough, the victory will be ours without fighting.”

This advice did not appeal to Yuan Shao. Said he, threateningly, “Tian Feng spoke discouraging words to my armies, and I will assuredly put him to death upon my return. How dare you follow in the same way?”

Yuan Shao summoned the lictors and sent away the adviser in chains, saying, “When I have overcome Cao Cao, then will I deal with you and Tian Feng together!”

The huge army was camped in four divisions, one toward each point of the compass. The camps were thirty miles in circuit. Scouts and spies were sent out to discover the strong and the weak points of the enemy.

Cao Cao’s army arrived and was smitten with fear when it heard of the strength of its enemy. The leader called together his council.

Said Adviser Xun You, “The enemy are many but not terrible. Ours is an army of veterans, every soldier of ours worth ten of theirs. But our advantage lies in a speedy battle, for unhappily, our stores are insufficient for a long campaign.”

“You speak to the point,” said Cao Cao. “I think the same.”

Therefore, Cao Cao issued orders to press noisily forward and force on a battle. Yuan Shao’s soldiers took up the challenge, and the two sides were arrayed.

On Yuan Shao's side, Shen Pei placed ten thousand crossbowmen in ambush along the two wings, while five thousand archers held the center. The signal for general attack was a bomb, and the onset was to continue through three rolls of the drum.

Yuan Shao wore a silver helmet and breastplate and an embroidered robe held in by a jeweled belt. He took up his post in the center, with his commanders—Gao Lan, Zhang He, Han Meng, Chunyu Qiong, and others—arranged right and left. His banners and ensigns made a brave show.

When Cao Cao's army's center opened and the banners moved aside, the chieftain appeared on horseback with his staff of doughty leaders all fully armed—Xu Chu, Zhang Liao, Xu Huang, Li Dian, and others.

Pointing with his whip at Yuan Shao, Cao Cao cried, "In the presence of the Emperor, I pressed your claims to consideration and obtained for you the title of Regent Marshal. Why do you now plan rebellion?"

Yuan Shao replied, "You take the title of a minister of Han, but you are really a rebel against the House. Your crimes and evil deeds reach to the heavens, and you are worse than the usurper Wang Mang and the rebel Dong Zhuo. What are these slanderous words about rebellion that dare you address to me?"

"I have a command to make you prisoner!"

"I have the Girdle Decree to arrest rebels!" replied Yuan Shao.

Then, Cao Cao became wrathful and bade Zhang Liao ride forth as his champion. From the other side rode Zhang He on a curvetting steed. The two champions fought forty or fifty bouts with no advantage to either. In his heart, Cao Cao thought the contest amazing. Then, Xu Chu whirled up his sword and went to help. From the other side, to match him, rode out Gao

Lan with his spear set, and the contestants were now four, battling two and two.

Cao Cao then ordered three thousand troops under Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong to attack the opponents' array. Thereupon, on Yuan Shao's side, Shen Pei gave the signal for attack, and the legion of crossbowmen along the wings and the center archers let fly all together. The arrows flew all over the field in front, and Cao Cao's troops could not advance. They hastened away toward the south. Yuan Shao threw his soldiers on their rear, and they were broken. They fled away toward Guandu, and Yuan Shao advanced another stage. He camped near them.

Then, Shen Pei said, "Now, send one hundred thousand soldiers to guard Guandu, and get near Cao Cao's camp. Then, build up observation mounds to get a clear view of the enemy, and choose vantage points whence to shoot arrows into the midst of their host. If we can force him to evacuate this place, we shall have gained a strategic point whence Capital Xuchang can be attacked."

Yuan Shao adopted this suggestion. From each of the camps, they sought out the strongest veterans, who dug with iron spades and carried earth to raise mounds near Cao Cao's camp.

Cao Cao's soldiers saw what their enemies were doing and were anxious to make a sortie and drive them off. But the archers and crossbowmen came out, commanding the narrow throat through which it was necessary to attack and stayed them. At the end of ten days, they had built up more than half-a-hundred mounds, and on the summit of each was a lofty tower whence the archers could command their opponents' camp.

Cao Cao's soldiers were greatly frightened and held up their bucklers to stave off the various missiles. From the mounds, the arrows flew down like a fierce rain after each roll of drums. The soldiers of Yuan Shao's army

laughed and jeered when they saw their enemies crouching under their shields and crawling on the ground to avoid their missiles.

Cao Cao saw that his troops were getting out of hand under this attack, so he called a council.

Liu Ye spoke up, saying, "Let us make catapults and so destroy them."

Cao Cao at once had models brought and set cunning workers to make these stone-throwing machines. They soon constructed some hundreds and placed them along the walls of the camp inside, just opposite the high ladders on the enemy's mounds.

Then, Cao Cao's troops watched for Yuan Shao's archers to ascend the towers. As soon as the archers began to shoot, all the catapults began to heave stone balls into the skies, and they wrought great havoc. There was no shelter from the falling stones, and enormous numbers of the archers were killed. Yuan Shao's troops called these machines "Rumblers," and after their appearance, the archers dared not ascend the mounds to shoot.

Shen Pei, the strategist, proceeded to think out another plan. He set troops to tunnel under the walls into the midst of Cao Cao's camp and called this corps "The Sappers."

Cao Cao's soldiers saw the enemy digging out pits behind the mounds and told the chief, who at once sought a counter-plan from Liu Ye.

"As Yuan Shao can no longer attack openly, he is attacking secretly and is tunneling a road underground into the midst of our camp," said Liu Ye.

"But how to meet it?"

"We can surround the camp with a deep moat, which renders their tunnel useless."

So a deep moat was dug as quickly as possible, and when the enemy sappers arrived thereat, lo! their labor had been in vain and the sap was useless.

Cao Cao held Guandu throughout the eighth and ninth months, after which, his army being worn out and provisions failing, he began to think of giving up and returning to the capital. As he could not make up his mind, he referred his difficulties by letter to Xun Yu, whom he had left to guard Xuchang. The reply he got was to this effect:

“I have received your command to decide whether to continue the campaign or retire. It appears to me that Yuan Shao assembled such large forces at Guandu with the expectation of winning a decision. You, Sir, are very weak, while he is very strong. If you cannot get the better of him, he will be able to work his will on you, and this will be a crisis for the empire. Your opponents are indeed numerous, but their leader knows not how to use them. With your military genius and discernment, where are you not sure to succeed? Now though your numbers are small, your situation is still brighter than Liu Bang’s when he faced against Xiang Yu in Jungyang and Chenggao. You are securely entrenched with your hands on Yuan Shao’s throat, and even if you cannot advance, that state of things cannot endure forever but must change. This is the time to play some unexpected move, and you must not miss it. The device I leave to your illustrious ingenuity.”

This letter greatly pleased Cao Cao, and he urged upon his troops to use every effort to maintain the position.

Yuan Shao then retired some ten miles, and Cao Cao sent out scouts to ascertain his new dispositions. One of Xu Huang's officers, Shi Huan, captured an enemy spy and sent him to his chief. Xu Huang interrogated him and found out that a convoy of supplies was expected and that this spy and others had been sent to find out what the risks of the route were. Xu Huang went at once to tell Cao Cao.

When Xun You heard that the commander of the convoy was Han Meng, he said, "That fellow is a valiant fool. A few thousand light horses sent to intercept him can capture the whole train and cause much trouble for the enemy's camp."

"Whom should I send?" asked Cao Cao.

"You might send Xu Huang. He is capable of such a task."

So Xu Huang was deputed, and he took with him Shi Huan, who had captured the spy, and his company. And this party was supported by Zhang Liao and Xu Chu.

It was night when the commissariat train of many thousands of wagons drew near Yuan Shao's camp. As they passed through a defile, Xu Huang and Shi Huan came out and stopped the train. Han Meng galloped up to give battle but was soon overcome. The guard was scattered, and soon the whole train was in flames. The escort and its leader fled away.

The glow of the flames, seen from Yuan Shao's camp, caused great consternation that became fear when the escaped soldiers rode in and told their tale.

Yuan Shao sent out Zhang He and Gao Lan to try to intercept the raiders, and they came upon Xu Huang and his company. Just as Zhang He and Gao Lan were attacking, reinforcements from Zhang Liao and Xu Chu came up, and the Yuan Shao's troops were between two fires. They were cut

to pieces and the successful generals of Cao Cao rode back to Guandu, where they were richly rewarded.

As an additional safeguard, Cao Cao made a supporting outpost in front of the main camp to be the apex of a triangle of defense.

When Han Meng returned with his woeful tidings, Yuan Shao was angry and threatened to put him to death. His colleagues begged him off.

Then, said Shen Pei, “Food is very important for an army in the field and must be defended with the greatest diligence. Wuchao is our main depot and must be carefully guarded.”

“My plans being complete,” said Yuan Shao, “you may as well return to Capital Yejun of Jizhou and undertake the control of the supplies. Let there be no shortage.”

So Shen Pei left the army. Then, a force of twenty thousand troops was told off to defend the depot in Wuchao. The leaders of this body were Chunyu Qiong, Gui Yuanjin, Han Juzi, Lu Weihuang, and Zhao Rui.

Of these generals, Chunyu Qiong was a hard man and a heavy drinker, who in his cups was a terror to the soldiers. Under the idle life of guarding the supply depot, the leaders gave themselves up to indulgence and drank heavily.

In Cao Cao’s army, food was also getting scarce, and a message was sent to Capital Xuchang to send grain quickly. The messenger with the letter, however, had not gone far when he fell into the hands of Yuan Shao’s guards, who took him to the adviser Xu You.

Seeing from the letter that Cao Cao was short of supplies, Xu You went to Yuan Shao and told him, saying, “Cao Cao and we have been at

grips here for a long time, and Capital Xuchang must be undefended. A small army sent quickly could take it, and at the same moment, an attack here would deliver Cao Cao into our hands. Now is the moment to strike, for his supplies are short.”

Yuan Shao replied, “Cao Cao is full of ruses, and this letter is artfully designed to bring about a battle to suit himself.”

“If you do not take this chance, he will do you some injury by and by.”

Just at this juncture, in came a dispatch from Yejun in which, after some details regarding the forwarding of grain, Shen Pei said he had discovered that Xu You had been in the habit of receiving bribes while in Jizhou and had winked at his relatives collecting excess taxes. One of his sons and his nephew were then in prison.

At this, Yuan Shao turned on Xu You angrily and said, “How can you have the face to stand before me and propose plans, you extortionate fellow? You and Cao Cao have old liking for each other, and he has bribed you to do his dirty work for him and help his base schemes. Now, you want to betray my army. I ought to take off your head, but temporarily, I will let your neck carry it away. Get out and never let me see you again.”

The discredited adviser sighed and went out, saying, “Faithful words offend his ear. He is a pest and unworthy of advice from me. And now that Shen Pei has injured my son and nephew, how can I look my fellow folks in the face again?”

And Xu You drew his sword to end his life. But his people prevented that.

They said, “If Yuan Shao rejects your honest words, then assuredly he will be taken by Cao Cao. You are an old friend of Cao Cao’s; why not abandon the shade for the sunlight?”

Just these few words awakened Xu You to consciousness of his position, and he decided to leave Yuan Shao and go over to Cao Cao for he was an old friend.



Vainly now for chances lost
Yuan Shao sighs; once he was great.
Had he taken Xu You's advice,
Cao Cao would not set up a state.



Xu You stealthily left the camp and set out for Cao Cao's lines. He was captured on the way. He told his captors: "I am an old friend of the Prime Minister. Go and tell the Prime Minister that Xu You of Nanyang wishes to see him."

They did so. Cao Cao was resting in his tent, his clothing loose and comfortable after the toils of the day. When he heard who wished to see him, he arose quite joyfully and hastily ran out, on bare feet, to receive Xu You. Cao Cao went forth to greet him. They saw each other in the distance, and Cao Cao clapped his hands with gladness, bowing to the ground when near enough to his visitor.

Xu You hastened to help him rise, saying, "Sir, you, a great minister, should not thus salute a simple civilian like me."

"But you are my old friend, and no name or office makes any difference to us," replied Cao Cao.

"Having been unable to choose the lord I would serve, I bowed my head before Yuan Shao, wishing to support him sincerely. But he was deaf

to my words and disregarded my plans. Wherefore, I have left him and come now to see my old friend, from whom I hope employment.”

“If you are willing to help, then indeed have I a helper,” said Cao Cao. “I desire you to give me a scheme for the destruction of Yuan Shao.”

“I counseled him to send a light force to take Capital Xuchang and at the same time attack here in full scale so that head and tail be both attacked.”

Cao Cao was alarmed, saying, “If he does so, I am lost!”

“How much grain have you in store?” said the new adviser.

“Enough for a year.”

“I think not quite,” said Xu You, smiling.

“Well, half a year.”

The visitor shook out his sleeves, rose and hurried toward the door of the tent, saying, “I offer him good counsel, and he repays me with deceit. Could I have expected it?”

Cao Cao held him back. “Do not be angry,” said he. “I will tell you the truth. Really, I have here only enough for three months.”

“Everybody says you are a marvel of wickedness, and indeed it is true,” said Xu You.

“But who does not know that in war there is no objection to deceit?” replied Cao Cao. Then, whispering in Xu You’s ear, he said, “Actually, here I have only supplies for this month’s use.”

“O do not throw dust in my eyes anymore. Your grain is exhausted, and I know it.”

Cao Cao was startled, for he thought no one knew of the straits he was in. “How did you find that out?” said Cao Cao.

Xu You produced the captured letter, saying, "Who wrote that?"

"Where did you get it?"

Whereupon, Xu You told Cao Cao the story of the captured messenger.

Cao Cao seized him by the hand, saying, "Since our old friendship has brought you to me, I hope you have some plan to suggest to me."

Xu You said, "To oppose a great army with a small one is to walk in the way of destruction, unless you inflict quick defeat. I can propose a plan which will defeat the innumerable hordes of Yuan Shao without fighting a battle. But will you follow my advice?"

"I very much desire to know your plan," said Cao Cao.

"Your enemy's stores of all kinds are at Wuchao, where the Commander of the Guard is that drunkard, Chunyu Qiong. You can send some of your trusty veterans to pretend they belong to one of Yuan Shao's generals, Jiang Qi, sent to help guard the depot. These soldiers can find an opportunity to ignite the grain and stores of all kinds, which will upset all of Yuan Shao's calculations. In three days, Yuan Shao is no more."

Cao Cao greatly approved. He treated Xu You very liberally and kept him in his camp. Forthwith, he chose five thousand riders and footsoldiers to ready for the expedition.

Zhang Liao protested, saying, "The enterprise will be futile, as the grain depot will certainly be well-guarded. Without caution, we may be victims of treachery on the part of the newly-arrived Xu You."

"Xu You is no traitor," said Cao Cao. "He has come sent by Heaven to defeat Yuan Shao. If we do not get grain, it will be hard to hold out. I have to either follow his advice or sit still and be hemmed in. If he were a traitor, he would hardly remain in my camp. Moreover, this raid has been my desire for a long time. Have no doubts: the raid will certainly succeed."

“Well, then, you must look out for an attack here while the camp is undefended.”

“That is already well-provided for,” said Cao Cao gleefully.

The arrangements for the raid on the grain depot were made with extreme care to ensure success. Cao Cao assigned Xun You, Jia Xu, and Cao Hong to guard the main camp, together with Xu You; Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan to guard the left camp; Cao Ren and Li Dian to guard the right camp.

When all was ready, they set out, Cao Cao himself in the center, with Zhang Liao and Xu Chu as van leaders and Xu Huang and Yu Jin as rearguard. The army displayed the ensigns of their opponents. The troops carried bundles of grass and faggots to make a blaze. The soldiers were gagged and the horses tied round the muzzles so as to prevent any noise. They set out at dusk.

The night was fine, and the stars shone brightly.

Ju Shou, still a prisoner in Yuan Shao's camp, saw the stars were very brilliant and told his jailers to conduct him out to the central pavilion, whence he could study them. While watching, he saw the planet Venus invade the quadrant of the Bear and Lyra, which startled him very greatly.

“Some misfortune is near!” said Ju Shou.

So although it was still night, he went to see his master. But Yuan Shao was sleeping after indulgence in too much wine and was in bad humor. However, when they had roused him saying that the prisoner had a secret message to deliver, he got up.

“While I happened to be studying the aspect of the heavens,” said the night visitor, “I saw Venus, then between Hydra and Cancer, suddenly shoot into the neighborhood of the Bear and Lyra. There is danger of a robber raid, and special precautions must be taken at the grain depot. Lose no time in sending good soldiers and vigorous leaders thither, and keep a lookout on the byways among the hills that you may escape the wiles of Cao Cao.”

“You are a criminal!” said Yuan Shao. “How dare you come with such wild nonsense to upset my armies.” And turning to the jailers, Yuan Shao continued, “I bade you confine him. Why did you let him come?” Then, he issued orders to put the jailers to death and appointed others to keep the prisoner in close custody.

Ju Shou went away, wiping his falling tears and sighing deeply, “Our soldiers’ destruction is at hand, and I know not where our poor corpses may find a resting place.”



Blunt truth offended Yuan Shao,
Too stupid any plan to make.
His stores destroyed, this is evident:
That Jizhou also is at stake.

Cao Cao’s raiding party went along through the night. Passing one of Yuan Shao’s outpost camps, they were challenged.

Cao Cao sent forward a man to say, “Jiang Qi has orders to go to Wuchao to guard the grain stores.”

Seeing that the raiders marched under the ensigns of Yuan Shao, the guard had no suspicions and let them pass. At every post, this ruse was effective, and they got safely through.

They reached their objective at the end of the fourth watch, the straw and wood were placed in position without loss of time, and the blaze started. Then, Cao Cao's commanders beat to attack.

At this time, Chunyu Qiong and his companions were all asleep after a heavy drinking bout. However, when the alarm was given, they sprang up and asked what was the matter. The hubbub was indescribable. Very soon, the fuddled officers were caught with hooks and hauled out of their camp.

Yuan Shao's generals Gui Yuanjin and Zhao Rui were just returning from taking grain to the camp, and seeing the flames arise, they hastened to assist.

Some of Cao Cao's soldiers ran to him, saying, "The enemy is coming up in the rear. Send reinforcements."

But Cao Cao only replied, "Press on to the front till the enemy is actually close at hand and then face about." So the attack was pressed on, and they all hastened forward. Very soon, the fire gained strength, and thick smoke hung all around, filling the sky.

When Gui Yuanjin and Zhao Rui drew near, Cao Cao turned about and attacked them. They could not stand this for a moment, and both generals were killed. Finally, the stores of grain and forage were utterly destroyed.

The commander, Chunyu Qiong, was made prisoner and taken to Cao Cao, who ordered him to be deprived of ears, nose, and hands. He was bound on a horse and sent, thus horribly mutilated, to his master.

From Yuan Shao's camp, the flames of the burning depot were seen away in the north, and all knew what they meant. Yuan Shao hastily summoned his officers to a council to send a rescue party.

Zhang He offered to go with Gao Lan, but Guo Tu said, "You must not go. It is certain that Cao Cao is there in person, wherefore his camp is undefended. Let loose our soldiers on the camp, and that will speedily bring Cao Cao back again. This is how Sun Bin besieged Wei and thereby rescued Zhao."

But Zhang He said, "Not so; Cao Cao is too wily not to have fully prepared against a chance attack. If we attack his camp and fail, and Chunyu Qiong should be caught, we shall all be captured, too."

Guo Tu said, "Cao Cao will be too intent on the destruction of the grain to think of leaving a guard. I entreat you to attack his camp."

So Yuan Shao sent five thousand soldiers under Zhang He and Gao Lan to attack Cao Cao's camp, and he sent ten thousand with Jiang Qi to go to recover the grain store.

Now after overcoming Chunyu Qiong, Cao Cao's troops dressed themselves in the armor and clothing of the defeated soldiers and put up their emblems, thus posing as a defeated force running back to their own headquarters. And when they happened upon Jiang Qi's rescue body, they said they had been beaten at Wuchao and were retreating. So Cao Cao's troops were suffered to pass without molestation, while Jiang Qi hastened on.

But soon Jiang Qi came to Zhang Liao and Xu Chu, who cried out, "Stop!" And before Jiang Qi could make any opposition, Zhang Liao had

cut him down. Soon his forces dispersed or were killed, and the victors sent false messengers to Yuan Shao's camp to say that Jiang Qi had attacked and driven away the attackers of the granaries. So no more relief was sent that way. However, Yuan Shao sent reinforcements to Guandu.

In due course, Yuan Shao's force came down upon Cao Cao's camp at Guandu, and the defenders—Xiahou Dun, Cao Ren, and Cao Hong—at once came out and fought them on three sides so that they were worsted. By the time reinforcements arrived, Cao Cao's army had returned from the raid, and Yuan Shao's army was attacked in the rear. So they were quite surrounded. However, Zhang He and Gao Lan managed to force their way out and get away.

When the remains of the defenders of the grain stores reached their master's camp, they were mustered. Seeing the mutilated state of their one-time leader, Yuan Shao asked how Chunyu Qiong had come to betray his trust and to suffer thus.

The soldiers told their lord, "The General was intoxicated at the time of the attack."

So Yuan Shao ordered Chunyu Qiong to be forthwith executed.

Guo Tu, fearing lest Zhang He and Gao Lan would return and testify the whole truth, began to intrigue against them.

First, Guo Tu went to his lord, saying, "Those two, Zhang He and Gao Lan, were certainly very glad when your armies were defeated."

"Why do you say this?" asked Yuan Shao.

"O they have long cherished a desire to go over to Cao Cao. So when you sent them on the duty of destroying his camp, they did not do their best

and so brought about this disaster.”

Yuan Shao accordingly sent to recall these two to be interrogated as to their faults. But Guo Tu sent a messenger in advance to warn them, as though in friendly guise, of the adverse fate that awaited them.

So when the orders reached them to return to answer for their faults, Gao Lan asked, “For what reason are we recalled?”

“Indeed, I do not know,” said the messenger.

Gao Lan drew his sword and killed the messenger.

Zhang He was astonished at this demonstration, but Gao Lan said, “Our lord has allowed someone to malign us and say we have been bought by Cao Cao. What is the sense in our sitting still and awaiting destruction? Rather, let us surrender to Cao Cao in reality and save our lives.”

“I have been wanting to do this for some time,” replied Zhang He.

Wherefore both, with their companies, made their way to Cao Cao’s camp to surrender.

When they arrived, Xiahou Dun said to his master, “These two have come to surrender, but I have doubts about them.”

Cao Cao replied, “I will meet them generously and win them over, even if they have treachery in their hearts.”

The camp gates were opened to the two officers, and they were invited to enter. They laid down their weapons, removed their armor, and bowed to the ground before Cao Cao, who said, “If Yuan Shao had listened to you, he would not have suffered defeat. Now you two coming to surrender is like Wei Zi leaving the falling House of Shang to go to Zhou and Han Xin leaving Xiang Yu to go over to the rising House of Han.”

Cao Cao made them Generals and conferred upon Zhang He the title of Lord of Duting and upon Gao Lan Lord of Donglai, which pleased them

much.

And so, as Yuan Shao had formerly driven sway his adviser, Xu You, so now he had alienated two leaders and had lost his stores at Wuchao, and his army was depressed and downhearted.

When Xu You advised Cao Cao to attack Yuan Shao as promptly as he could, the two newly-surrendered generals volunteered to lead the way. So Cao Cao sent Zhang He and Gao Lan to make a first attack on the camp, and they left in the night with three thousand troops. The fighting went on confusedly all night but stayed at dawn. Yuan Shao lost half of his army.

Then, Xun You suggested a plan to Cao Cao, saying, "Now is the moment to spread a report that an army will go to take Suanzao and attack Yejun, and another to take Liyang and intercept the enemy's retreat. Yuan Shao, when he hears of this, will be alarmed and tell off his troops to meet this new turn of affairs, and while he is making these new dispositions, we can have him at great disadvantage."

Cao Cao adopted the suggestion, and care was taken that the report spread far around. It came to the ears of Yuan Shao's soldiers, and they repeated it in camp. Yuan Shao believed it and ordered his son Yuan Tan with fifty thousand troops to rescue Yejun, and General Xin Ping with another fifty thousand to go to Liyang, and they marched away at once.

Cao Cao heard that these armies had started, and at once dispatched troops in eight divisions to make a simultaneous attack on the nearly-empty camp. Yuan Shao's troops were too dispirited to fight and gave way on all sides.

Yuan Shao, without waiting to don his armor, went forth in simple dress with an ordinary cap upon his head and mounted his steed. His youngest son, Yuan Shang, followed him. Four of the enemy generals—Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Xu Huang, and Yu Jin—with their forces pressed in his rear, and Yuan Shao hastened across the river, abandoning all his documents and papers, baggage, treasure, and stores. Only eight hundred horsemen followed him over the stream.

Cao Cao's troops followed hard but could not catch up with him. However, they captured all his impedimenta and slew some eighty thousands of his army so that the watercourses ran blood and the drowned corpses could not be counted. It was a most complete victory for Cao Cao, and he made over all the spoils to the army.

Among the papers of Yuan Shao was found a bundle of letters showing secret correspondence between him and many persons in the capital and army.

Cao Cao's personal staff suggested that the names of those concerned should be abstracted and the persons arrested, but their lord said, "Yuan Shao was so strong that even I could not be sure of safety. How much less other people?"

So Cao Cao ordered the papers to be burned, and nothing more was said.

Now when Yuan Shao's soldiers ran away, Ju Shou, being a prisoner, could not get away and was captured.

Taken before Cao Cao, who knew him, Ju Shou cried aloud, "I will not surrender!"

Said Cao Cao, “Yuan Shao was foolish and neglected your advice: why still cling to the path of delusion? Had I had you to help me, I would have been sure of the empire.”

Ju Shou was well-treated in the camp, but he stole a horse and tried to get away to Yuan Shao. This angered Cao Cao who recaptured him and put him to death, which he met with brave composure.

“I have slain a faithful and righteous man!” then said Cao Cao sadly.

And the victim was honorably buried at Guandu. His tomb bore the inscription: “This is the tomb of Ju Shou the Loyal and Virtuous.”



Ju Shou was honest and virtuous,
The best in Yuan Shao's train,
From him the stars no secrets held,
In tactics all was plain.
For him no terrors had grim death.
Too lofty was his spirit,
His captor slew him, but his tomb
Bears witness to his merit.



Cao Cao then gave orders to attack Jizhou.

In feeling overconfident, that's where one's weakness
lay;

The other bettered him by plans which never went astray.

The following chapter will tell who won the next campaign.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VIII

CHAPTER 31

CAO CAO OVERCOMES YUAN SHAO IN CANGTING; LIU BEI SEEKS
SHELTER WITH LIU BIAO IN JINGZHOU.

Cao Cao lost no time in taking advantage of Yuan Shao's flight but smote hard at the retreating army. Yuan Shao without helmet or proper dress, and with few followers, crossed hastily to the north bank at Liyang. He was met by one of his generals, Jiang Yiqu, who took him in and comforted him and listened to the tale of misfortunes. Next, Jiang Yiqu called in the scattered remnants of the army, and when the soldiers heard that their old lord was alive, they swarmed to him like ants so that Yuan Shao quickly became strong enough to attempt the march to Jizhou. Soon, the army set out, and at night halted at Huang Hills.

That evening, sitting in his tent, Yuan Shao seemed to hear a far-off sound of lamentation. He crept out quietly to listen and found it was his own soldiers telling each other tales of woe. This one lamented an elder brother lost, that one grieved for his younger brother abandoned, a third mourned a companion missing, a fourth, a relative cut off. And each beat his breast and wept.

And all said, "Had he but listened to Tian Feng, we shall not have met this disaster!"

Yuan Shao, very remorseful, said, "I did not harken unto Tian Feng, and now my soldiers have been beaten and I was nearly lost. How can I return and look him in the face?"

Next day, the march was resumed, and Yuan Shao met Peng Ji with reinforcements, to whom he said, "I disregarded Tian Feng's advice and have brought myself to defeat. Now shall I be greatly ashamed to look him in the face."

This tribute to Tian Feng's prescience roused the jealousy of Peng Ji, who replied, "Yes. When he heard the news of your defeat, though he was a prisoner, he clapped his hands for joy and said, 'Indeed, just as I foretold!'"

"How dare he laugh at me, the blockhead? Assuredly, he shall die!" said Yuan Shao. Whereupon, Yuan Shao wrote a letter and sent therewith a sword to slay the prisoner.

Meanwhile, Tian Feng's jailer came to him one day, saying, "Above all humans, I felicitate you."

"What is the joyful occasion, and why felicitate?" said Tian Feng.

The jailer replied, "Imperial Protector Yuan Shao has been defeated and is on his way back. He will treat you with redoubled respect."

"Now am I a dead man!" said Tian Feng.

"Why say you that, Sir, when all people give you joy?"

"The Imperial Protector appears liberal, but he is jealous and forgetful of honest advice. Had he been victorious, he might have pardoned me. Now that he has been defeated and put to shame, I may not hope to live."

But the jailer did not believe Tian Feng. Before long came the letter and the sword with the fatal order.

The jailer was dismayed, but the victim said, "I knew all too well that I should have to die."

The jailer wept.

Tian Feng said, "An able person born into this world who does not recognize and serve the right lord is ignorant. Today, I die, but I am not

deserving of pity.”

Whereupon, he cut his throat in the prison.



Ju Shou but yesterday was killed,
Tian Feng ends his life, his fate fulfilled;
The Yellow River's main beams break one by one,
Mourn ye that Yuan House! Its day is done.



Thus died Tian Feng, pitied by all who heard of his fate.

When Yuan Shao came home to Jizhou, he was with troubled mind and distorted thoughts. He could not attend to the business of government and became so ill that his second wife, who came of the Liu family and had replaced the first wife after her death, besought him to make his last dispositions.

Now three sons had been born to Yuan Shao: Yuan Tan the eldest, who was the Commander of Qingzhou; Yuan Xi, who ruled over Youzhou; and Yuan Shang, borne to him by Lady Liu. This youngest son was very handsome and noble-looking, and his father's favorite. So he was kept at home.

After the defeat at Guandu, the lad's mother constantly urged that her son be named as successor, and Yuan Shao called together four of his counselors to consider this matter. These four happened to be divided in

their sympathies: Shen Pei and Peng Ji being in favor of the youngest son, and Xin Ping and Guo Tu supporters of the eldest.

When they met to consult, Yuan Shao said, "As there is naught but war and trouble outside our borders, it is necessary that tranquility within be early provided for, and I wish to appoint my successor. My eldest son is hard and cruel, my second is mild and unfit. The third has the outward form of a hero, appreciates the wise, and is courteous to his subordinates. I wish him to succeed, but I wish that you tell me your opinions."

Guo Tu said, "Yuan Tan is your firstborn, and he is in a position of authority beyond your control. If you pass over the eldest in favor of the youngest, you sow the seeds of turbulence. The prestige of the army has been somewhat lowered, and enemies are on our border. Should you add to our weakness by making strife between father and son, elder and younger brothers? Rather, consider how the enemy may be repulsed and turn to the question of the heirship later."

Then, the natural hesitation of Yuan Shao asserted itself, and he could not make up his mind. Soon came news that his son Yuan Tan was coming from Qingzhou with sixty thousand troops, Yuan Xi coming from Youzhou with fifty thousand troops, and his nephew Gao Gan coming from Bingzhou with fifty thousand troops to help him, and he turned his attention to preparations for fighting Cao Cao.

When Cao Cao drew up his victorious army on the banks of the Yellow River, the aged natives brought an offering of food and sauce to bid him welcome. Their venerable and hoary appearances led Cao Cao to treat them with the highest respect.

He invited them to be seated and said to them, “Venerable Sirs, what may be your age?”

“We are nearly a hundred,” replied the old villagers.

“I would be very sorry if my army has disturbed your village,” said Cao Cao.

One of them said, “In the days of the Emperor Huan, a yellow star was seen over by way of the ancient states of Chu and Song in the southwest. Yin Kui of Liaodong, who was learned in astrology, happened to be passing the night here, and he told us that the star foretold the arrival in these parts, fifty years hence, of a true and honest man here by the Yellow River. Lo! That is exactly fifty years ago.

“Now Yuan Shao is very hard on the people, and they hate him. You, Sir, having raised this army in the cause of humanity and righteousness, out of pity for the people and to punish crimes, and having destroyed the hordes of Yuan Shao at Guandu, just fulfill the prophecy of Yin Kui. The millions of the land may look now for tranquility.”

“How dare I presume that I am he?” said Cao Cao with a smile.

Wine was served and refreshments brought in, and the old gentlemen were sent away with presents of silk stuffs. An order was issued to the army that if anyone killed so much as a fowl or a dog belonging to the villagers, he would be punished as for murder. And the soldiers obeyed with fear and trembling while Cao Cao rejoiced in his heart.

It was told to Cao Cao that the total army from the four regions under the Yuan family amounted to two hundred thirty thousand soldiers and they

were camped at Cangting. Cao Cao then advanced nearer to them and made a strong camp.

Next day, the two armies were arrayed over against each other. On one side, Cao Cao rode to the front surrounded by his commanders, and on the other appeared Yuan Shao, supported by his three sons, his nephew, and his leaders.

Cao Cao spoke first, "Yuan Shao, your schemes are poor and your strength is exhausted; why still refuse to think of surrender? Are you waiting till the sword shall be upon your neck? Then, it will be too late."

Yuan Shao turned to those about him, saying, "Who dares go out?"

His son Yuan Shang was anxious to exhibit his prowess in the presence of his father, so he flourished his pair of swords and rode forth.

Cao Cao pointed him out to his officers and asked, "Anyone know him?"

"He is the youngest son of Yuan Shao," was the reply.

Before they had finished speaking, from their own side rode out Shi Huan, armed with a spear. The two champions fought a little while until, suddenly, Yuan Shang whipped up his horse, made a feint, and fled. His opponent followed. Yuan Shang took his bow, fitted an arrow, turned in his saddle, and shot at Shi Huan, wounding him in the left eye. Shi Huan fell from the saddle and died on the spot.

Yuan Shao, seeing his son thus get the better of his opponent, gave the signal for attack, and the whole army thundered forward. The onslaught was heavy, but presently, the gongs on both sides sounded the retreat, and the battle ceased.

When he returned to camp, Cao Cao took counsel to find a plan to overcome Yuan Shao. Then, Cheng Yu proposed the plan of the “Ten Ambushes” and persuaded Cao Cao to retire upon the river, placing troops in ambush as he went. Thus would Yuan Shao be inveigled into pursuit as far as the river, when Cao Cao’s army would be forced to make a desperate stand or be driven into the water.

Cao Cao accepted this suggestion and told off ten companies of five thousand soldiers each to lie in ten ambushes on two sides of the road of retreat. The arrangement of the ambushes were thus: on the left, first company under Xiahou Dun; second company, Zhang Liao; third company, Li Dian; fourth company, Yue Jin; fifth company, Xiahou Yuan; on the right, first company was under Cao Hong; second company, Zhang He; third company, Xu Huang; fourth company, Yu Jin; fifth company, Gao Lan. Xu Chu commanded the advanced front.

Next day, the ten companies started first and placed themselves right and left as ordered. In the night, Cao Cao ordered the advanced front to feign an attack on the camp, which roused all the enemy in all their camps. This done, Xu Chu retreated, and Yuan Shao’s army came in pursuit. The roar of battle went on without cessation, and at dawn, Cao Cao’s army rested on the river and could retreat no farther.

Then, Cao Cao shouted, “There is no road in front, so all must fight or die.”

The retreating army turned about and advanced vigorously. Xu Chu simply flew to the front, smote and killed ten generals and threw Yuan Shao’s army into confusion. They tried to turn and march back, but Cao Cao was close behind. Then, the drums of the enemy were heard, and to the right and left there appeared two ambush companies of Gao Lan and

Xiahou Yuan. Yuan Shao collected about him his three sons and his nephew, and they were enabled to cut an alley out and flee.

Three miles farther on, they fell into another ambush of Yue Jin and Yu Jin, and here, many troops of Yuan Shao were lost so that their corpses lay over the countryside and blood filled the watercourses. Another three miles, and they met the third pair of Li Dian and Xu Huang barring their road.

Here, they lost heart and bolted for an old camp of their own that was near, and bade their men prepare a meal. But just as the food was ready to eat, down came Zhang Liao and Zhang He, bursting into the camp.

Yuan Shao mounted and fled as far as Cangting, at which point he was tired and his steed spent. But there was no rest, for Cao Cao came in close pursuit. It seemed now a race for life. But presently, Yuan Shao found his onward course again blocked by Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong, and he groaned aloud.

“If we do not make most desperate efforts, we are all captives!” said he.

And they plunged forward. His second son, Yuan Xi, and his nephew, Gao Gan, were wounded by arrows, and most of his soldiers were dead or had disappeared. He gathered his sons into his arms and wept bitterly. Then, he fell into a swoon. He was picked up, but his mouth was full of blood, which ran forth in a bright, scarlet stream.

He sighed, saying, “Many battles have I fought, and little did I think to be driven to this. Heaven is afflicting me. You had better return each to his own territory and swear to fight this Cao Cao to the end.”

Then, Yuan Shao bade Xin Ping and Guo Tu as quickly as possible follow Yuan Tan to Qingzhou and prepare to give battle to Cao Cao, lest he

should invade. Yuan Xi was told to go to Youzhou and Gao Gan to Bingzhou.

So each started to prepare armies and horses for repulsing Cao Cao. Yuan Shao, with his youngest son, Yuan Shang, and the remnant of his officers, went away to Jizhou, and military operations were suspended for a time.

Meanwhile, Cao Cao was distributing rewards to his army for the late victory, and his spies were scouting all about Jizhou. He soon learned that Yuan Shao was ill, and that the youngest son, Yuan Shang, and Shen Pei were in command of the city, while his brothers and cousin had returned each to his own. Cao Cao's advisers were in favor of a speedy attack.

But he objected, saying, "Jizhou is large and well-supplied. Shen Pei is an able strategist. And it behooves me to be careful. I would rather wait till the autumn, when the crops have been gathered in so that the people will not suffer."

While the attack was being talked over, there came letters from Xun Yu:

"Liu Bei was strengthening himself at Runan with the force of Liu Pi and Gong Du, and when he heard that you were attacking Jizhou, he said he would take the opportunity to march on the capital. Wherefore you, Sir, should hasten homeward to defend Xuchang."

This news disconcerted Cao Cao. He left Cao Hong in command on the riverbank, with orders to maintain the appearance of strength there,

while he led the main part of his army to meet the threatened attack from Runan.

Meanwhile, Liu Bei, his Brothers, and their leaders, having gone forth with the intention of attacking the capital, had reached a point near the Rang Mountains when Cao Cao came upon them. So Liu Bei camped by the hills and divided his army into three, sending Guan Yu and Zhang Fei with ten thousand troops each to entrench themselves southeast and southwest respectively of the main body, which he and Zhao Yun commanded.

When Cao Cao came near, Liu Bei beat his drums and went out to where Cao Cao had already arrayed his army.

Cao Cao called Liu Bei to a parley, and when the latter appeared under his great standard, Cao Cao pointed his whip at him and railed, saying, "I treated you as a guest of the highest consideration. Why, then, do you turn your back on righteousness and forget kindness?"

Liu Bei replied, "Under the name of Prime Minister, you are really a rebel. I am a direct descendant of the family, and I have a secret decree from the Throne to take such offenders as you."

As he said these words, he produced and recited the decree which is known as the "Girdle Mandate."

Cao Cao grew very angry and ordered Xu Chu to go out to battle. As Liu Bei's champion, out rode Zhao Yun with spear ready to thrust. The two warriors exchanged thirty bouts without advantage to either. Then, there arose an earth-rending shout, and up came the two Brothers, Guan Yu from the southeast and Zhang Fei from the southwest. The three armies then began a great attack, which proved too much for Cao Cao's troops, fatigued

by a long march, and they were worsted and fled. Liu Bei, having scored this victory, returned to camp.

Next day, he sent out Zhao Yun again to challenge the enemy, but it was not accepted and Cao Cao's army remained ten days without movement. Then, Zhang Fei offered a challenge, which also was not accepted. And Liu Bei began to feel anxious.

Then, unexpectedly, came news that the enemy had stopped a train of supplies brought by Gong Du, and at once, Zhang Fei went to the rescue. Worse still was the news that followed: an army led by Xiahou Dun had gotten in behind to attack Runan.

Quite dismayed, Liu Bei said, "If this be true, I have enemies in front and rear and have no place to go."

He then sent Guan Yu to try to recover the city and thus both his brothers were absent from his side. One day later, a horseman rode up to say that Runan had fallen, its defender Liu Pi had fled, and Guan Yu was surrounded. To make matters worse, the news came that Zhang Fei, who had gone to rescue Gong Du, was in like case.

Liu Bei tried to withdraw his troops, fearing all the time an attack from Cao Cao. Suddenly, the sentinels came in, saying, "Xu Chu is at the camp gate offering a challenge."

Liu Bei did not allow his army to go out. They waited till dawn, and then, Liu Bei bade the soldiers get a good meal and be ready to start. When ready, the infantry went out first, the horsemen next, leaving a few troops in the camp to beat the watch bells and maintain an appearance of occupation.

After traveling some miles, they passed some mounds. Suddenly, torches blazed out, and on the summit stood one who shouted, "Do not let Liu Bei run away! I, the Prime Minister, am here awaiting you!"

Liu Bei dashed along the first clear road he saw.

Zhao Yun said, "Fear not, my lord, only follow me!"

And setting his spear, Zhao Yun galloped in front, opening an alley as he went. Liu Bei gripped his double swords and followed close. As they were winning through, Xu Chu came in pursuit and engaged Zhao Yun, and two other companies led by Yu Jin and Li Dian bore down as well. Seeing the situation so desperate, Liu Bei plunged into the wilds and fled.

Gradually, the sounds of battle became fainter and died away while he went deeper and deeper into the hills, a single horseman fleeing for his life. He kept on his way till daybreak, when a company suddenly appeared beside the road. Liu Bei saw these men with terror at first, but was presently relieved to find they were led by the friendly Liu Pi. They were a company of his defeated army escorting the family of their chief. With them also were Sun Qian, Jian Yong, and Mi Fang.

They told him, "The attack on Runan was too strong to be resisted, and so we were compelled to abandon the defense, and the enemy followed, and only Guan Yu's timely arrival saved us from destruction."

"I do not know where my Brother is," said Liu Bei.

"All will come right if you will push on," said Liu Pi.

They pushed on. Before they had gone far, the beating of drums was heard, and suddenly appeared Zhang He with a thousand soldiers.

Zhang He cried, "Liu Bei, quickly dismount and surrender!"

Liu Bei was about to retire when he saw a red flag waving from a rampart on the hills and down came rushing another body of troops under Gao Lan.

Thus checked in front and his retreat cut off, Liu Bei looked up to Heaven and cried, "O Heaven, why am I brought to this state of misery?"

Nothing is left for me now but death!" And he drew his sword to slay himself.

But Liu Pi stayed his hand, saying, "Let me try to fight a way out and save you. Death is nothing to me!"

As he spoke, Gao Lan's force was on the point of engaging his. The two leaders met, and in the third bout, Liu Pi was cut down. Liu Bei at once rushed up to fight, but just then, there was sudden confusion in the rear ranks of the opponents, and a warrior dashed up and thrust at Gao Lan with his spear. Gao Lan fell from his steed. The newcomer was Zhao Yun.

His arrival was most opportune. He urged forward his steed thrusting right and left, and the enemy's ranks broke and scattered. Then, the first force under Zhang He came into the fight, and the leader and Zhao Yun fought thirty or more bouts. However, this proved enough, for Zhang He turned his horse away, recognizing that he was worsted. Zhao Zilong vigorously attacked, but was forced into a narrow space in the hills where he was hemmed in.

While seeking for some outlet, they saw Guan Yu, Guan Ping, and Zhou Cang, with three hundred men, coming along. Soon, Zhang He was driven off, and then Liu Bei's troops came out of the narrow defile and occupied a strong position among the hills, where they made a camp.

Liu Bei sent Guan Yu for news of the missing Brother. Zhang Fei had been attacked by Xiahou Yuan who had killed Gong Du, but Zhang Fei had vigorously resisted, beaten him off, and followed him up. Then, Yue Jin had come along and surrounded Zhang Fei.

In this pass, he was found by Guan Yu, who had heard of his plight from some of his scattered soldiers met on the way. Now, they drove off the enemy. The two Brothers returned.

Soon, they heard of the approach of a large body of Cao Cao's army. Liu Bei then bade Sun Qian guard his family and sent him on ahead, while he and the others kept off the enemy, sometimes giving battle and anon marching. Seeing that Liu Bei had retired too far, Cao Cao let him go and left the pursuit.

When Liu Bei collected his army, he found they numbered only a thousand, and this halting and broken force marched as quickly as possible to the west. Coming to a river, they asked the natives its name and were told it was the Han River, and near it, Liu Bei made a temporary camp. When the local people found out who was in the camp, they presented meat and wine.

A feast was given upon a sandy bank of the Han River.

After they had drunk awhile, Liu Bei addressed his faithful followers, saying, "All you, Fair Sirs, have talents fitting you to be advisers to a monarch, but your destiny has led you to follow poor me. My fate is distressful and full of misery. Today, I have not a spot to call my own, and I am indeed leading you astray. Therefore, I say you should abandon me and go to some illustrious lord where you may be able to become famous."

At these words, they all covered their faces and wept.

Guan Yu said, "Brother, you are wrong to speak thus. When the great Founder of Han contended with Xiang Yu, he was defeated many times, but he won at the Nine-Mile Mountains, and that achievement was the foundation of a dynasty that has endured for four centuries. Victory and defeat are but ordinary events in a soldier's career, so why should you give up?"

“Success and failure both have their seasons,” said Sun Qian, “and we are not to grieve. Jingzhou, which your illustrious relative, Liu Biao, commands, is a rich and prosperous country. Liu Biao is of your house; why not go to him?”

“Only that I fear he may not receive me,” said Liu Bei.

“Then let me go and prepare the way. I will make Liu Biao come out to his borders to welcome you.”

So with his lord’s approval, Sun Qian set off immediately and hastened to Jingzhou. When the ceremonies of greeting were over, Liu Biao asked the reason of the visit.

Said Sun Qian, “The princely Liu Bei is one of the heroes of the day, although just at the moment, he may lack soldiers and leaders. His mind is set upon restoring the dynasty to its pristine glory, and at Runan, the two commanders Liu Pi and Gong Du, though bound to him by no ties, were content to die for the sake of his ideals.

“You, Illustrious Sir, like Liu Bei, are a scion of the imperial stock. Now, the Princely One has recently suffered defeat and thinks of seeking a home in the east with Sun Quan. I have ventured to dissuade him, saying that he should not turn from a relative and go to a mere acquaintance, telling him that you, Sir, are well-known as courteous to the wise and condescending to scholars, so that they flock to you as the waters flow to the east sea, and that certainly you would show kindness to one of the same ancestry. Wherefore, he has sent me to explain matters and request your commands.”

“He is my brother,” said Liu Biao, “and I have long desired to see him, but no opportunity has occurred. I would be very happy if he would come.”

Cai Mao, who was sitting by, here broke in, “No, no! Liu Bei first followed Lu Bu, then he served Cao Cao, and next he joined himself to Yuan Shao. And he stayed with none of these, so that you can see what manner of man he is. If he comes here, Cao Cao will assuredly come against us and fight. Better cut off this messenger’s head and send it as an offering to Cao Cao, who would reward you well for the service.”

Sun Qian sat unmoved while this harangue was pronounced, saying at the end, “I am not afraid of death. Liu Bei, the Princely One, is true and loyal to the state and so out of sympathy with Lu Bu, or Cao Cao, or Yuan Shao. It is true he followed these three, but there was no help for it. Now he knows your chief is a member of the family, so that both are of the same ancestry, and that is why he has come far to join him. How can you slander a good man like that?”

Liu Biao bade Cai Mao be silent and said, “I have decided, and you need say no more.” Whereat Cai Mao sulkily left the audience chamber.

Then, Sun Qian was told to return with the news that Liu Bei would be welcome, and Imperial Protector Liu Biao went ten miles beyond the city to meet his guest.

When Liu Bei arrived, he behaved to his host with the utmost politeness and was warmly welcomed in return. Then, Liu Bei introduced his two sworn Brothers and friends, and they entered Jingzhou City, where Liu Bei finally was lodged in the Imperial Protector’s own residence.

As soon as Cao Cao knew whither his enemy had gone, he wished to attack Liu Biao, but Cheng Yu advised against any attempt, so long as Yuan Shao, the dangerous enemy, was left with power to inflict damage.

He said, “My lord should return to the capital to refresh the soldiers so that they may be ready for a north and south campaign in the mild spring weather.”

Cao Cao accepted his advice and set out for the capital. In the first month of the eighth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 203), Cao Cao once again began to think of war, and sent to garrison Runan as a precaution against Liu Biao. Then, after arranging for the safety of the capital, he marched a large army to Guandu, the camp of the year before, and aimed at Jizhou.

As to Yuan Shao, who had been suffering from blood-spitting but was now in better health, he began to think of measures against Xuchang, but Shen Pei dissuaded him, saying, “You are not yet recovered from the fatigues of last year. It would be better to make your position impregnable and set to improving the army.”

When the news of Cao Cao’s approach arrived, Yuan Shao said, “If we allow the foe to get close to the city before we march to the river, we shall have missed our opportunity. I must go out to repel this army.”

Here, his son Yuan Shang interposed, “Father, you are not sufficiently recovered for a campaign and should not go so far. Let me lead the army against this enemy.”

Yuan Shao consented, and he sent to Qingzhou and Youzhou and Bingzhou to call upon his other two sons and his nephew to attack Cao Cao at the same time as his own army.

Against Runan they beat the drum,
And from Jizhou the armies come.

To whom the victory went will be seen in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VIII

CHAPTER 32

JIZHOU TAKEN: YUAN SHANG STRIVES; RIVER ZHANG CUT: XUN YOU
SCHEMES.

Yuan Shang was puffed up with pride after his victory over Shi Huan and, without deigning to await the arrival of his brothers, he marched out with thirty thousand troops to Liyang to meet the army of Cao Cao.

Zhang Liao came out to challenge him, and Yuan Shang, accepting the challenge, rode out with spear set. But he only lasted to the third bout, when he had to give way. Zhang Liao smote with full force and Yuan Shang, quite broken, fled pell-mell to Jizhou. His defeat was a heavy shock to his father Yuan Shao, who had a severe fit of hemorrhage at the news and swooned.

Lady Liu, his wife, got him to bed as quickly as possible, but he did not rebound; she soon saw it was necessary to prepare for the end. So she sent for Shen Pei and Peng Ji that the succession might be settled. They came and stood by the sick man's bed, but by this time, he could no longer speak; he only made motions with his hands.

Then, his wife put the formal question, "Is Yuan Shang to succeed?"

Yuan Shao nodded his head. Shen Pei at the bedside wrote out the dying man's testament. Presently, Yuan Shao uttered a loud moan, a fresh fit of bleeding followed, and he passed away.



Born of a line of nobles famous for generations,

He himself in his youth was wayward always and
headstrong,
Vainly he called to his side generals skilled and
courageous,
Gathered beneath his banner countless legions of
soldiers,
For he was timid at heart, a lamb dressed as a tiger,
Merely a cowardly chicken, phoenix-feathered but
spurless.
Pitiful was the fate of his house; for when he departed
Brother with brother strove and quarrels arose in the
household.



Shen Pei and some others set about the mourning ceremonies for the dead man. His wife, Lady Liu, put to death five of his favorite concubines, and such was the bitterness of her jealousy that, not content with this, she shaved off the hair and slashed the faces of their poor corpses lest their spirits should meet and rejoin her late husband in the land of shades beneath the Nine Golden Springs. Her son followed up this piece of cruelty by slaying all the relatives of the unfortunate concubines lest they should avenge their deaths.

Shen Pei and Peng Ji declared Yuan Shang successor with the titles of Regent Marshal and Supreme Imperial Protector of the four regions of Jizhou, Qingzhou, Youzhou, and Bingzhou and sent in a report of the death of the late Imperial Protector.

By this time, Yuan Tan, the eldest son, had already marched out his army to oppose Cao Cao. But hearing of his father's death, he called in Guo Tu and Xin Ping to consult as to his course of action.

"In your absence, my lord," said Guo Tu, "the two advisers of your younger brother will certainly set him up as lord; wherefore, you must act quickly."

"Those two, Shen Pei and Peng Ji, have already laid their plans," said Xin Ping. "If you go, you will meet with some misfortune."

"Then what should I do?" asked Yuan Tan.

Guo Tu replied, "Go and camp near the city, and watch what is taking place, while I enter and inquire."

Accordingly, Guo Tu entered the city and sought an interview with the young Imperial Protector.

"Why did not my brother come?" asked Yuan Shang after the usual salutes.

Guo Tu said, "He cannot come as he is in the camp, unwell."

"By the command of my late father, I take the lordship. Now, I confer upon my brother the rank of General of the Flying Cavalry, and I wish him to go at once to attack Cao Cao, who is pressing on the borders. I will follow as soon as my army is in order."

"There is no one in our camp to give advice," said Guo Tu. "I wish to have the services of Shen Pei and Peng Ji."

"I also need the help of these two," said Yuan Shang. "And as I am always working on schemes, I do not see how I can do without them."

"Then let one of these two go," replied Guo Tu.

Yuan Shang could do no other than accede to this request, so he bade the two men cast lots who should go. Peng Ji drew the lot and was

appointed, receiving a seal of office. Then, he accompanied Guo Tu to the camp. But when he arrived and found Yuan Tan in perfect health, he grew suspicious and resigned.

Yuan Tan angrily refused to accept his resignation and was disposed to put him to death, but Guo Tu privately dissuaded him, saying, “Cao Cao is on the borders, and Peng Ji must be kept here to allay your brother’s suspicions. After we have beaten Cao Cao, we can at once make an attempt on Jizhou.”

Yuan Tan agreed and forthwith broke up his camp to march against the enemy. He reached Liyang and lost no time in offering battle. He chose for his champion Wang Zhao, and when Wang Zhao rode out, Cao Cao sent Xu Huang to meet him. These two had fought but a few bouts when Wang Zhao was slain.

At once, Cao Cao’s army pressed forward, and Yuan Tan suffered a severe defeat. Yuan Tan drew off his army and retired into Liyang, whence he sent to his brother for reinforcements.

Yuan Shang and his adviser Shen Pei discussed the matter, and only five thousand troops were sent. Cao Cao, hearing of the dispatch of this meager force, sent Li Dian and Yue Jin to waylay them, and the half-legion was destroyed. When Yuan Tan heard of the inadequate force that was sent and its destruction, he was very wroth and roundly abused Peng Ji.

Peng Ji replied, “Let me write to my lord and pray him to come himself.”

So Peng Ji wrote, and the letter was sent. When it arrived, Yuan Shang again consulted Shen Pei.

The Counselor said, “Guo Tu, your elder brother’s adviser, is very guileful. Formerly, he left without discussion because Cao Cao was on the

border. If Cao Cao be defeated, there will certainly be an attempt on you. The best plan is to withhold assistance and use Cao Cao's hand to destroy your rival."

Yuan Shang took his advice, and no help was sent. When the messenger returned to Liyang without success, Yuan Tan was very angry and showed it by putting Peng Ji to death. He also began to talk of surrendering to Cao Cao. Soon spies brought news of this to Yuan Shang, and again Shen Pei was called in.

Yuan Shang said, "If Yuan Tan goes over to Cao Cao, they will both attack Jizhou, and we shall be in great danger."

Finally, Shen Pei and General Su You were left to take care of the defense of the city, and Yuan Shang marched his army to the rescue of his brother.

"Who dares lead the van?" said Yuan Shang.

Two brothers named Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang volunteered, and thirty thousand troops were given to them. They were the first to reach Liyang.

Yuan Tan was pleased that Yuan Shang had decided to play a brotherly part and come to his aid, so he at once abandoned all thought of going over to the enemy. He being in the city, Yuan Shang camped outside, making an ox-horn formation of their strategic position.

Before long, Yuan Xi, the second brother, and their cousin, Gao Gan, arrived with their legions and also camped outside the city.

Engagements took place daily, and Yuan Shang suffered many defeats. On the other hand, Cao Cao was victorious and elated. In the second month of the eighth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 203), Cao Cao made separate

attacks on all four armies and won the day against each. Then, the Yuans abandoned Liyang, and Cao Cao pursued them to Jizhou, where Yuan Tan and Yuan Shang went into the city to defend it, while their brother and cousin camped about ten miles away, making a show of great force.

After Cao Cao had made many attacks without success, Guo Jia proffered the following plan.

He said, "There is dissension among the Yuans because the elder has been superseded in the succession. The brothers are about equally strong, and each has his party. If we oppose them, they unite to assist each other, but if we have patience, they will be weakened by family strife. Wherefore, send first a force to reduce Liu Biao in Jingzhou, and let the fraternal quarrels develop. When they have fully developed, we can smite them and settle the matter."

Cao Cao approved of the plan. So, leaving Jia Xu as Governor of Liyang and Cao Hong as guard at Guandu, the army went away toward Jingzhou.

The two brothers Yuan Tan and Yuan Shang congratulated each other on the withdrawal of their enemy, and their brother Yuan Xi and their cousin Gao Gan marched their armies back to their own districts.

Then, the quarrels began. Yuan Tan said to his confidants Guo Tu and Xin Ping, "I, the eldest, have been prevented from succeeding my father, while the youngest son, born of a second wife, received the main heritage. My heart is bitter."

Said Guo Tu, "Camp your army outside, invite your brother and Shen Pei to a banquet, and assassinate them. The whole matter is easily settled."

And Yuan Tan agreed. It happened that Adviser Wang Xiu came just then from Qingzhou, whom Yuan Tan took into his confidence.

Wang Xiu opposed the murder plan, saying, "Brothers are as one's limbs. How can you possibly succeed if, at a moment of conflict with an enemy, you cut off one of your hands? If you abandon your brother and sever relationship, whom will you take in all the world as a relation? That fellow Guo Tu is a dangerous mischief-maker who would sow dissension between brothers for a momentary advantage, and I beg you to shut your ears and not listen to his persuasions."

This was displeasing to Yuan Tan, and he angrily dismissed Wang Xiu, while he sent the treacherous invitation to his brother.

Yuan Shang and Shen Pei talked over the matter.

Shen Pei said, "I recognize one of Guo Tu's stratagems, and if you go, my lord, you will be the victim of their plot. Rather, strike at them at once."

Whereupon, Yuan Shang rode out to battle. His brother Yuan Tan, seeing him come with fifty thousand troops, knew that his treachery had been discovered, so he also took the field.

When the forces were near enough, Yuan Tan opened on Yuan Shang with a volley of abuse. "You poisoned my father and usurped the succession. Now, you come out to slay your elder brother?"

The battle went against Yuan Tan. Yuan Shang himself took part in the fight, risking the arrows and the stones. He urged on his troops and drove his brother off the field. Yuan Tan took refuge in Pingyuan. Yuan Shang drew off his army to his own city.

Yuan Tan and Guo Tu decided upon a new attack, and this time they chose General Cen Bi as Leader of the Van. Yuan Shang went to meet him. When both sides had been arrayed and the banners were flying and the drums beating, Cen Bi rode out to challenge and railed at his opponent. At first Yuan Shang was going to answer the challenge himself, but Lu Kuang had advanced. Lu Kuang and Cen Bi met but had fought only a few bouts when Cen Bi fell. Yuan Tan's soldiers were once more defeated and ran away to Pingyuan. Shen Pei urged his master to press for the advantage, and Yuan Tan was driven into the city, where he fortified himself and would not go out. So the city was besieged on three sides.

Yuan Tan asked his strategist what should be done next, and Guo Tu said, "The city is short of food, the enemy is flushed with victory, and we cannot stand against them. My idea is to send someone to offer surrender to Cao Cao and thus get him to attack Jizhou. Your brother will be forced to return thither, which will leave you free to join in the attack; we may capture Yuan Shang. Should Cao Cao begin to get the better of your brother's army, we will lend our force to help Yuan Shang against Cao Cao, and as Cao Cao's base of supply is distant, we shall drive him off. And we can seize on Jizhou and begin our great design."

"Supposing this scheme be attempted, who is the man for a messenger?"

"I have one Xin Pi, Xin Ping's younger brother. Xin Pi is the magistrate here in this very place. He is a fluent speaker and good scholar and suited to your purpose."

So Xin Pi was summoned and came readily enough. Letters were given to him, and an escort of three thousand soldiers took him beyond the border. He traveled as quickly as possible.

At that time, Cao Cao's camp was at the Xiping Pass, and he was attacking Liu Biao, who had sent Liu Bei out to offer the first resistance. No battle had yet taken place.

Soon after his arrival, Xin Pi was admitted to the Prime Minister's presence. After the ceremonies of greeting, Cao Cao asked the object of the visit. Xin Pi explained that Yuan Tan wanted assistance and presented his dispatches. Cao Cao read them and told the messenger to wait in his camp while he called his officers to a council.

The council met. Cheng Yu said, "Yuan Tan has been forced into making this offer because of the pressure of his brother's attack. Put no trust in him."

Lu Qian and Man Chong said, "You have led your armies here for a special purpose. How can you abandon that and go to assist Yuan Tan?"

"Gentlemen, not one of you is giving good advice," interposed Xun You. "This is how I regard it. Since there is universal trouble in the midst of which Liu Biao remains quietly content with his position between the River Zhang and the River Han, it is evident that he has no ambition to enlarge his borders. The Yuans hold four regions and have many legions of soldiers. Harmony between the two brothers means success for the family, and none can foresee what would happen in the empire.

"Now, take advantage of this fraternal conflict and let them fight till they are weakened and have to yield to our Prime Minister. Then, Yuan Shang can be removed, and when the times are suitable, Yuan Tan can be destroyed in his turn. Thus, peace will ensue. This present combination of circumstances is to be taken advantage of to full measure."

Cao Cao realized the truth of this and treated Xin Pi well.

At a banquet, Cao Cao said, “But is this surrender of Yuan Tan real or false? Do you really think that Yuan Shang’s army is sure to overcome him?”

Xin Pi replied, “Illustrious Sir, do not inquire into the degree of sincerity; rather, regard the situation. The Yuans have been suffering military losses for years and are powerless without, while their strategists are put to death within. The brothers seize every chance to speak evil of each other, and their country is divided. Add to this famine, supplemented by calamities and general exhaustion, and everybody, wise as well as simple, can see that catastrophe is near and the time ordained of Heaven for the destruction of the Yuans is at hand.

“Now you have a force attacking the capital of Jizhou, Yejun, and if Yuan Shang will not return to give aid, their place of refuge is lost. If he helps, then Yuan Tan will follow up and smite him, making use of your power to destroy the remnant of his brother’s army, just as the autumn gale sweeps away the fallen leaves. Now Liu Biao’s Jingzhou is rich, the government peaceful, the people submissive, and it cannot be shaken. Moreover, there is no greater threat to it than the North of Yellow River. If that be reduced, then the task is complete. I pray you, Sir, think of it.”

“I am sorry that I did not meet you earlier,” said Cao Cao, much gratified with this speech.

Forthwith, orders were given to return and attack Jizhou. Liu Bei, fearing this retirement was only a ruse, allowed it to proceed without interference and himself returned to Jingzhou.

When Yuan Shang heard that Cao Cao had crossed the Yellow River, he hastily led his army back to Yejun, ordering Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang to guard the rear.

Yuan Tan started from Pingyuan with a force in pursuit. He had proceeded only a dozen miles when he heard a bomb, and two bodies of troops came out in front of him and checked his progress. Their leaders were Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang.

Yuan Tan reined in and addressed them, saying, "While my father lived, I never treated you badly. Why do you support my brother and try to injure me?"

The two generals had no reply to make, but they dismounted and bowed before him, yielding submission.

Yuan Tan said, "Do not surrender to me but to the Prime Minister."

And he led them back to camp, where he awaited the arrival of Cao Cao and then presented the pair. Cao Cao received them well. He promised his daughter to Yuan Tan as wife, and he appointed the two brothers as advisers.

When Yuan Tan asked Cao Cao to attack Jizhou, the reply was: "Supplies are short and difficult to transport. I must turn the waters of the River Ji into the White River whereby to convey my grain, and afterwards, I can advance."

Ordering Yuan Tan to remain in Pingyuan, Cao Cao retired into camp at Liyang. The two brothers Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang, who were renegades from Yuan Shang, were now raised to noble rank and followed the army as supernumeraries.

Guo Tu noted this advancement and said to Yuan Tan, "He has promised you a daughter as wife. I fear that bodes no good. Now, he has

given titles of nobility to the two Lus and taken them with him. This is a bait for the northern people, and at the same time, he intends evil toward us. You, my lord, should have two generals' seals engraved and send them secretly to the brothers so that you may have friends at court ready for the day when Cao Cao shall have broken your brother's power, and we can begin to work against him."

The seals were engraved and sent.

As soon as the Lu brothers received them, they informed Cao Cao, who smiled, saying, "He wants your support, so he sends you seals as officers. I will consider it as soon as Yuan Shang has been dealt with. In the meantime, you may accept the seals till I shall decide what to do."

Thenceforward, Cao Cao planned Yuan Tan's doom.

Shen Pei and his master also discussed the current situation. Yuan Shang said, "Cao Cao is getting grain onto the White River, which means an attack on Jizhou. What is to be done?"

Shen Pei replied, "Send letters to Yin Kai, Commander of Wuan, bidding him camp at Maocheng to secure the road to Shangdang, and direct Ju Gu, son of Ju Shou, to maintain Handan as a distant auxiliary. Then, you may advance on Pingyuan and attack Yuan Tan. After he is destroyed, Cao Cao is next."

The plan seemed good. Yuan Shang left Shen Pei and Chen Lin in charge of Yejun, appointed two Commanders Ma Yan and Zhang Zi as Van Leaders, and set out hastily for Pingyuan.

When Yuan Tan heard of the approach of his brother's army, he sent urgent messages to Cao Cao, who said to himself, "I am going to get Jizhou

this time.”

Just at this time, it happened that Xun You came down from the capital. When he heard that Yuan Shang was attacking his brother Yuan Tan, he sought Cao Cao and said, “You, Sir, sit here on guard. Are you waiting till Heaven’s thunder shall strike the two Yuans?”

“I have thought it all out,” said Cao Cao. Then, he ordered Cao Hong to go and fight against Yejun, while he led another army against Yin Kai in Maocheng. Yin Kai could make no adequate defense and was killed by Xu Chu. His soldiers ran away and presently joined Cao Cao’s army.

Next, Cao Cao led the army to Handan, and Ju Gu came out to fight him. Zhang Liao advanced to fight with Ju Gu, and after the third encounter, Ju Gu was defeated and fled. Zhang Liao went after him, and when their two horses were not far apart, Zhang Liao took his bow and shot. The fleeing warrior fell as the bowstring twanged. Cao Cao completed the rout, and Ju Gu’s force was broken up.

Now, Cao Cao led his armies to an attack on Yejun. Cao Hong had arrived before, and a regular siege began. The army encompassed the city and began by building up great mounds. They also tunneled subterranean passages.

Within the city, Shen Pei turned his whole attention to the defense and issued the severest commands. The Commander of the East Gate, Feng Li, got intoxicated and failed to keep his watch for which he was severely punished. Feng Li resented this, sneaked out of the city, went over to the besiegers, and told them how the place could be attacked.

“The earth within the Pearly Gate is solid enough to be tunneled, and entrance can be effected there,” said the traitor. So Feng Li was sent with three hundred men to carry out his plan under cover of darkness.

After Feng Li deserted to the enemy, Shen Pei went every night to the wall to inspect the soldiers on duty. The night of the sapping, he went there as usual and saw that there were no lights outside the city and all was perfectly quiet.

So he said to himself, "Feng Li is certain to try to come into the city by an underground road." Whereupon, he ordered his troops to bring up stones and pile them on the cover of the tunnel opening. The opening was stopped up, and the attacking party perished in the tunnel they had excavated.

Cao Cao, having failed in this attempt, abandoned the scheme of underground attack. He drew off the army to a place above the River Huan to await till Yuan Shang should return to relieve the city.

Yuan Shang heard of the defeat of Yin Kai and Ju Gu, and the siege of his own city, and bethought himself of relieving it.

One of his commanders, Ma Yan, said, "The high road will surely be ambushed. We must find some other way. We can take a byroad from the West Hills and get through by the River Fu, whence we can fall upon Cao Cao's camp."

The plan was acceptable and Yuan Shang started off with the main body, Ma Yan and Zhang Zi being rear guard.

Cao Cao's spies soon found out this move, and when they reported it, he said, "If Yuan Shang comes by the high road, I shall have to keep out of the way, but if by the West Hills' by-road, I can settle him in one battle. And I think he will show a blaze as a signal to the besieged that they may make a sortie. I shall prepare to attack both." So Cao Cao made his preparations.

Now, Yuan Shang went out east by the River Fu toward Yangping, and near this he camped. Thence to Yejun was five miles. The River Fu ran

beside the camp. He ordered his soldiers to collect firewood and grass ready for the blaze he intended to make at night as his signal. He also sent Li Mu, a civil officer, disguised as an officer of Cao Cao's army, to inform Shen Pei of his intentions.

Li Mu reached the city wall safely and called out to the guards to open. Shen Pei recognized his voice and let him in. Thus, Shen Pei knew of the arrangements for his relief, and it was agreed that a blaze would be raised within the city so that the sortie could be simultaneous with Yuan Shang's attack. Orders were given to collect flammables.

Then, said Li Mu, "As your food supply is short, it would be well for the old people, the feeble soldiers, and the women to surrender. This will come upon them as a surprise, and we will send the soldiers out behind them."

Shen Pei promised to do all this, and next day, they hoisted on the wall a white flag with the words "The populace of Jizhou surrender!" on it.

"Ho ho! This means no food," said Cao Cao. "They are sending away the noncombatants to escape feeding them. And the soldiers will follow behind them."

Cao Cao bade Zhang Liao and Xu Huang lay an ambush of three thousand troops on both sides while he went near the wall in full state. Presently, the gates were opened, and out came the people, supporting their aged folks and leading their little ones by the hand. Each carried a white flag. As soon as the people had passed the gate, the soldiers followed with a rush.

Then, Cao Cao showed a red flag, and the ambushing soldiers led by Zhang Liao and Xu Huang fell upon the sortie. The troops tried to return, and Cao Cao's force made a direct attack. The chase continued to the drawbridge, but there, Cao Cao's force met with a tremendous shower of

arrows and crossbow bolts which checked the advance. Cao Cao's helmet was struck and the crest carried away. His leaders came to pull him back, and the army retired.

As soon as Cao Cao had changed his dress and mounted a fresh horse, he set out at the head of the army to attack Yuan Shang's camp.

Yuan Shang led the defense. The attack came simultaneously from many directions. The defenders were quite disorganized and subsequently defeated. Yuan Shang led his troops back by the West Hills and made a camp under their shelter. Thence, he sent messengers to urge Ma Yan and Zhang Zi to bring in reinforcements. He did not know that Cao Cao had sent Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang to persuade these two into surrender and that they had already passed under Cao Cao's banner, and he had conferred upon them the title of lordship.

Just before going to attack the West Hills, Cao Cao sent Lu Xiang, Lu Kuang, Ma Yan, and Zhang Zi to seize the source of Yuan Shang's supplies.

Yuan Shang realized he could not hold the hills, so he went by night to Lankou. Before he could get camped, he saw flaring lights springing up all around him, and soon an attack began. He was taken aback and had to oppose the enemy with his men half-armed, his steeds unsaddled. His army suffered, and he had to retreat another fifteen miles. By that time, his force was too enfeebled to put up any resistance, and as no other course was possible, he sent the Imperial Protector of Yuzhou, Yin Ku, to Cao Cao's camp to ask that he might surrender.

Cao Cao feigned to consent, but that night, he sent Zhang Liao and Xu Huang to raid Yuan Shang's camp. Then it became flight, abandoning

everything: seals, emblems of office, and even personal clothing. Yuan Shang made for the Zhongshan Mountains.

Then Cao Cao came to attack Jizhou City, and to help this out, Xun You suggested drowning the city by turning the course of the River Zhang. Cao Cao adopted the suggestion and, at once, sent a small number of men to dig a channel to lead the water to the city. All told, it was seventeen miles long.

Shen Pei saw the diggers from the city wall and noticed that they made only a shallow channel.

He chuckled, saying to himself, "What is the use of such a channel to drown out the city from a deep river?" So he made no preparations to keep out the water.

But as soon as night came on, Cao Cao increased his army of diggers tenfold, and by daylight, the channel was deepened to twenty spans and the water was flowing in a great stream into the city, where it already stood some spans deep. So this misfortune was added to the lack of food.

Xin Pi now displayed the captured seal and garments of Yuan Shang hung out on spears, to the great shame of their late owner, and called upon the people of the city to surrender. This angered Shen Pei, who avenged the insult by putting to death on the city wall the whole of the Xin family who were within the city. There were eighty of them, and their severed heads were cast down from the walls. Xin Pi wept exceedingly.

Shen Pei's nephew Shen Rong, one of the gate wardens, was a dear friend of Xin Pi, and the murder of Xin Pi's family greatly distressed him. He wrote a secret letter offering to betray the city and tied it to an arrow,

which he shot out among the besiegers. The soldiers found it and gave it to Xin Pi, who took it to his chief.

Cao Cao issued an order:

“The family of the Yuans should be spared when the city is taken, and no one who surrendered shall be put to death.”

The next day the soldiers entered by the west gate, opened for them by Shen Rong. Xin Pi was the first to prance in on horseback, and the army followed.

When Shen Pei, who was on the southeast of the city, saw the enemy within the gates, he placed himself at the head of some horsemen and dashed toward them. He was met and captured by Xu Huang, who bound him and led him outside the city.

On the road they met Xin Pi, who ground his teeth with rage at the murderer of his relatives and then struck the prisoner over the head with his whip, crying, “Murderer! Blood drinker! You will meet your death!”

Shen Pei retorted, “Traitor! Seller of the city! I am very sorry I did not slay you before!”

When the captive was taken into Cao Cao’s presence, Cao Cao said, “Do you know who opened the gate to let me in?”

“No, I know not.”

“It was your nephew Shen Rong who gave up the gate,” said Cao Cao.

“He always was unprincipled, and it has come to this!” said Shen Pei.

“The other day when I approached the city, why did you shoot so hard at me?”

“I am sorry we shot too little.”

“As a faithful adherent of the Yuans, you could do no otherwise. Now, will you come over to me?”

“Never; I will never surrender.”

Xin Pi threw himself on the ground with lamentations, saying, “Eighty of my people murdered by this ruffian. I pray you slay him, O Prime Minister!”

“Alive, I have served the Yuans,” said Shen Pei. “Dead, I will be their ghost! I am no flattering time-server as you are. Kill me!”

Cao Cao gave the order. They led him away to put him to death.

On the execution ground, he said to the executioners, “My lord is in the north; I pray you not to make me face the south.”

So Shen Pei knelt facing the north and extended his neck for the fatal stroke.



Who of all the official throng
In the North was true like Shen Pei?
Sad his fate! He served a fool,
But faithful, as the ancient humans.
Straight and true was every word,
Never from the road he swerved.
Faithful unto death, he died
Gazing toward the lord he'd served.



Thus died Shen Pei, and from respect for his character, Cao Cao ordered that he be buried honorably on the north of the city.

The Prime Minister then entered the city of Yejun. As he was starting, he saw the executioners hurrying forward a prisoner who proved to be Chen Lin.

“You wrote that manifesto for Yuan Shao. If you had only directed your diatribe against me, it would not have mattered. But why did you shame my forefathers?” said Cao Cao.

“When the arrow is on the string, it must fly,” replied Chen Lin.

Those about Cao Cao urged him to put Chen Lin to death, but he was spared on account of his genius and given a civil post.

Now Cao Cao's eldest son was named Cao Pi. At the taking of the cities, he was eighteen years of age. When he was born, a dark purplish halo hung over the house for a whole day. One who understood the meaning of such manifestations had secretly told Cao Cao that the halo belonged to the imperial class and portended honors which could not be put into words.

At eight, the lad could compose very skillfully, and he was well read in ancient history. Now, he was adept at all military arts and very fond of fencing.

He had gone with his father on the expedition to Jizhou. After Yejun had fallen, he led his escort in the direction of the Yuan family dwelling, and when he reached it, he strode in, sword in hand. When some commander would have stayed him, saying that by order of the Prime Minister no one was to enter the house, Cao Pi bade them begone. The

guards fell back, and he made his way into the private rooms, where he saw two women weeping in each other's arms. He went forward to slay them.

Four generations of honors, gone like a dream,
Fate follows on ever surely, though slow she seems.

The fate of the two women will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act VIII

CHAPTER 33

A GALLANT WARRIOR, CAO PI MARRIES LADY ZHEN; AN EXPIRING STAR, GUO JIA SETTLES LIAODONG.

As was said, Cao Pi, having made his way into the Yuans' palace, saw two women there whom he was about to kill. Suddenly, a red light shone in his eyes, and he paused.

Lowering his sword, he said, "Who are you?"

"Thy handmaid is the widow of the late Yuan Shao, Lady Liu," said the elder of the two, "and this is the wife of Yuan Xi, his second son. She was of the Zhen family. When Yuan Xi was sent to command in Youzhou, her family objected to her going so far from home and she stayed behind."

Cao Pi drew Lady Zhen toward him and looked at her closely. Her hair hung disordered, and her face was dusty and tear-stained, but when, with the sleeve of his inner garment, he had wiped away these disfigurements, he saw a woman of exquisite loveliness, with a complexion clear as jade touched with the tender bloom of a flower petal, a woman indeed beautiful enough to ruin a kingdom.

"I am the son of the Prime Minister," said he, turning to the elder woman. "I will guarantee your safety, so you need fear nothing."

He then put aside his sword and sat down at the upper end of the room.

As Cao Cao was entering the gate of the conquered city of Yejun, Xu You rode up very quickly, passed him, and pointed with his whip at the gate, saying, “Sir Prime Minister, you would not be here but for my plans!”

Cao Cao laughed, but his generals were very annoyed.

When Cao Cao reached the residence, he stopped at the gate and asked, “Has anyone gone in?”

The guard at the gate said, “Your son is within.”

Cao Cao called him out and chided him, but the wife of the late Imperial Protector interposed, saying, “But not for your son, we would not have been saved. I desire to present to you a lady, of the Zhen family, as a handmaid to your son.”

Cao Cao bade them bring out the girl, and she bowed before him. After looking at her intently, he said, “Just the wife for him!”

And he told Cao Pi to take Lady Zhen as wife.

After the conquest of Jizhou had been made quite sure, Cao Cao made a ceremonial visit to the Yuan family cemetery, where he sacrificed at the tomb of his late rival, bowed his head, and lamented bitterly.

Turning to his generals, he said, “Not long ago, when Yuan Shao and I worked together in military matters, he asked me, ‘If this disturbance does not cease, what fronts should be held?’ And I replied asking him what he thought. He said, ‘In the North of Yellow River, to the south I would hold the Yellow River; in the north, I would guard against Yan and Dai and absorb the hordes from the Gobi Desert. Thence southward, I would try for the empire: do you not think I might succeed?’ I replied saying, ‘I depend

upon the wisdom and force of the world as directed by scholars; then everything would be possible.'

"These words seem as if spoken only yesterday, and now he is gone. Thinking over it, I cannot refrain from tears."

His officers were deeply affected. Cao Cao treated the widow generously, giving her gold and silks and food to her content.

He also issued a further order that the taxes in the North of Yellow River would be remitted in consideration of the sufferings of the people during the warlike operations. He sent a memorial to the Throne and formally became Imperial Protector of Jizhou.

One day Xu Chu, riding in at the east gate, met Xu You, who called out to him, "Would you fellows be riding through here if it had not been for me?"

Xu Chu replied, "We fellows—those who survive and those who perished—risked our lives in bloody battle to get this city, so do not brag of your deeds!"

"You are a lot of blockheads, not worth talking about," said Xu You.

Xu Chu, in his anger, drew his sword and ran Xu You through. Then, he took Xu You's head and went to tell Cao Cao the reason.

Said Cao Cao, "He and I were old friends, and we could joke together. Why did you kill him?" He blamed Xu Chu very severely and gave orders that Xu You be buried honorably.

Cao Cao then inquired for any wise and reputable people who were known to be living in the region and was told: "Commander Cui Yan, of Dongwu, who had on many occasions given valuable advice to Yuan Shao.

As the advice was not followed, he had pleaded indisposition and remained at home.”

Cao Cao sent for this man, gave him an office and said to him, “According to the former registers, there are three hundred thousand households in the region so that one may well call it a major region.”

Cui Yan replied, “The empire is rent, and the country is torn; the Yuan brothers are at war, and the people have been stripped naked. Yet, Sir, you do not hasten to inquire after local conditions and how to rescue the people from misery, but you first compute the possibilities for taxation. Can you expect to gain the support of our people by such means?”

Cao Cao accepted the rebuke, changed the policy, thanked him, and treated him all the better for it.

As soon as Jizhou was settled, Cao Cao sent to find out the movements of Yuan Tan. He heard Yuan Tan was ravaging Ganling, Anping, Bohai, and Hejian. Moreover, the scouts brought the news that Yuan Shang had fled to Zhongshan, and Yuan Tan led an expedition against him, but Yuan Shang would not face a battle. He had gone away to Youzhou to his brother Yuan Xi. Yuan Tan, having gathered Yuan Shang’s troops, prepared for another attempt on Jizhou.

Whereupon, Cao Cao summoned him. Yuan Tan refused to come, and Cao Cao sent letters breaking off the marriage between Yuan Tan and his daughter. Soon after, Cao Cao led an expedition against Yuan Tan and marched to Pingyuan, whereupon Yuan Tan sent to Liu Biao to beg assistance. Liu Biao sent for Liu Bei to consult about this.

Liu Bei said, "Cao Cao is very strong, now that he has overcome Jizhou, and the Yuans will be unable to hold out for long. Nothing is to be gained by helping Yuan Tan, and it may give Cao Cao the loophole he is always looking for to attack this place. My advice is to keep the army in condition and devote all our energies to defense."

"Agreed, but what shall we say?" said Liu Biao.

"Write to both the brothers as peacemaker in gracious terms."

Accordingly, Liu Biao wrote thus to Yuan Tan:

"When the superior person would escape danger, that person does not go to an enemy state. I heard recently that you had crooked your knee to Cao Cao, thus ignoring the enmity between him and your father, rejecting the duties of brotherhood, and leaving behind you the shame of an alliance with the enemy. If your brother, the successor to Jizhou, has acted unfraternally, your duty is to bend your inclination to follow him and wait till the state of affairs had settled. Would it not have been very noble to bring about the redress of wrongs?"

And to Yuan Shang, Liu Biao wrote:

"Your brother, the ruler of Qingzhou, is of an impulsive temperament and confuses right with wrong. You ought first to have destroyed Cao Cao in order to put an end to the hatred which your father bore him and, when the situation had become settled, to have endeavored to redress the wrongs. Would not that have been well? If you persist in following this mistaken course, remember the hound and the hare, both so wearied that the peasant got them both."

From this letter, Yuan Tan saw that Liu Biao had no intention of helping him and felt he alone could not withstand Cao Cao. He abandoned Pingyuan and fled to Nanpi, whither Cao Cao pursued him.

The weather was very cold and the river was frozen, so that the grain boats could not move. Wherefore, Cao Cao ordered the inhabitants to break the ice and tow the boats. When the peasants heard the order, they ran away. Cao Cao angrily wished to arrest and behead them. When they heard this, they went to his camp in a body and offered their heads to the sword.

“If I do not kill you, my order will not be obeyed,” said Cao Cao. “Yet supposing I cut off your heads, I find I cannot bear to do of that severity. Quickly flee to the hills and hide so that my soldiers do not capture you.”

The peasants left weeping.

Then, Yuan Tan led out his army against Cao Cao. When both sides were arrayed, Cao Cao rode to the front.

Pointing with his whip at his opponent, Cao Cao railed at him, saying, “I treated you well. Why, then, have you turned against me?”

Yuan Tan replied, “You have invaded my land, captured my cities, and broken off my marriage. Yet, you accuse me of turning against you!”

Cao Cao ordered Xu Huang to go out and give battle. Yuan Tan bade Peng An accept the challenge. After a few bouts Peng An was slain; Yuan Tan, having lost, fled and went into Nanpi, where he was besieged. Panic-stricken, he sent Xin Ping to see Cao Cao and arrange surrender.

“He is nothing but a fickle-minded child,” said Cao Cao. “He is never of the same mind two days running, and I cannot depend upon what he says. Now your brother Xin Pi is in my employ and has a post of importance; you had better remain here also.”

“Sir Prime Minister, you are in error,” said Xin Ping. “It is said that the lord’s honor is the servant’s glory; the lord’s sadness is the servant’s shame. How can I turn my back on the family I have so long served?”

Cao Cao felt he could not be persuaded and sent him back. Xin Ping returned and told Yuan Tan the surrender could not be arranged.

Yuan Tan turned on him angrily, saying, “Your brother is with Cao Cao, and you want to betray me also!”

At this unmerited reproach, such a huge wave of anger welled up in Xin Ping’s breast that he was overcome and fell in a swoon. They carried him out, but the shock had been too severe, and soon after, he died. Yuan Tan regretted his conduct when it was too late.

Then, Guo Tu said, “Tomorrow, when we go out to battle, we will drive the people out in front as a screen for the soldiers; we must fight a winning battle.”

That night, they assembled all the common people of the place and forced into their hands swords and spears. At daylight, they opened the four gates, and a huge party with much shouting came out from each, peasantry carrying arms in front and soldiers behind them. They pushed on toward Cao Cao’s camps, and a melee began that lasted till near midday. But this was quite indecisive, although heaps of dead lay everywhere.

Seeing that success was at best only partial, Cao Cao rode out to the hills nearby and thence had the drums beaten for a new attack under his own eye. His officers and troops, seeing that he could observe them in person, exerted themselves to their utmost, and Yuan Tan’s army was severely defeated. Of the peasantry driven into the battlefield, multitudes were slain.

Cao Hong, who displayed very great valor, burst into the press of battle and met Yuan Tan face to face. The two slashed and hammered at each other, and Yuan Tan was killed.

Guo Tu saw that his side was wholly disorganized and tried to withdraw into the shelter of Nanpi. Yue Jin saw this and opened a tremendous discharge of arrows so that Guo Tu fell and the moat was soon filled with dead.

The city of Nanpi fell to Cao Cao. He entered and set about restoring peace and order. Then, suddenly appeared a new army under two of Yuan Xi's generals, Jiao Chu and Zhang Neng. Cao Cao led out his troops to meet them, but the two commanders laid down their arms and yielded. They were rewarded with the rank of lordship.

Then Zhang Yan, the leader of the Black Hills Brigands, came with one hundred thousand troops and gave in his submission. He was made General Who Pacifies the North.

By an order of Cao Cao, the head of Yuan Tan was exposed, and death was threatened to anyone who should lament for him. Nevertheless, a man dressed in mourning attire was arrested for weeping below the exposed head at the north gate. Taken into Cao Cao's presence, he said he was Wang Xiu and had been an officer in Qingzhou. He had been expelled because he had remonstrated with Yuan Tan. But when the news of Yuan Tan's death came, he had come to weep for his late master.

"Did you know of my command?" said Cao Cao.

"I knew it."

"Yet you were not afraid?"

“When one has received favors from a man in life, it would be wrong not to mourn at his death. How can one stand in the world if one forgets duty through fear? If I could bury his body, I would not mind death.”

Cao Cao said, “And there were many such as this in the north. What a pity that the Yuan family could not make the best of them! But if they had done so, I would never have dared to turn my eyes toward this place.”

The intrepid mourner was not put to death. The remains of Yuan Tan were properly interred, and Wang Xiu was well-treated and even given an appointment.

In his new position, Wang Xiu was asked for advice about the best way to proceed against Yuan Shang, who had fled to his second brother, but Wang Xiu remained silent, thereby winning from Cao Cao renewed admiration for his constancy.

“He is indeed loyal!” said Cao Cao.

Then, he questioned Guo Jia, who advised him, saying, “Give Yuan Xi’s former generals the command and ask them to attack Youzhou.”

Whereupon, Jiao Chu and Zhang Neng were given the command and reinforced by the armies under Lu Xiang, Lu Kuang, Ma Yan, and Zhang Zi to bring about the surrender of Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang. Then the six generals set out to attack Youzhou along three routes. Other armies led by Li Dian, Yue Jin, and Zhang Yan were sent against Gao Gan at Bingzhou.

The two, Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang, heard of Cao Cao’s advance with dismay, for they had no hope of successful resistance. Therefore, they abandoned Youzhou and hastily marched into Liaoxi to seek refuge with the Wuhuan tribespeople in the frontier Wuhuan State.

However, Wuhuan Chu, new Imperial Protector of Youzhou, was not disposed to incur the enmity of the powerful Cao Cao, so he called his subordinates together to swear them to support him.

Wuhuan Chu said, "I understand that Cao Cao is the most powerful man of the day, and I am going to support him, and those who do not go with me I shall put to death."

Each, in turn, smeared his lips with the blood of sacrifice and took the oath, till it came to the turn of Han Heng. Instead, he dashed his sword to the ground, crying, "I have received great promotions and benefits from the Yuans. Now, my lord has been vanquished. My knowledge was powerless to save him, and my bravery insufficient to cause me to die for him: I have failed in my duty. But I refuse to commit the crowning act of treachery and ally myself with Cao Cao."

This speech made the others turn pale.

The chief said, "For a great undertaking, there must be lofty principles. However, success does not necessarily depend upon universal support, and since Han Heng is actuated by such sentiments, let him follow his conscience."

So Wuhuan Chu turned Han Heng out of the assembly. Wuhuan Chu then went out of the city to meet and welcome Cao Cao's army and rendered his submission. He was well received and the title given him of General Who Guards the North.

Then, the scouts came to report: "Generals Li Dian, Yue Jin, and Zhang Yan marched to Bingzhou, but that Gao Gan had occupied Huguan Pass and could not be dislodged."

So Cao Cao marched thither himself. The defender still maintaining his position, Cao Cao asked for plans. Xun You proposed that a band should

go over, pretending to be deserters. Cao Cao assented and then called the two Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang, to whom he gave whispered orders. They left with their companies.

Soon, they came near the pass and called out, saying, "We are old officers in Yuan Shao's armies forced into surrender to Cao Cao. We find him so false and he treats us so meanly that we want to return to help our old master. Wherefore, quickly open your gates to us."

Gao Gan was suspicious, but he let the two officers come up to the pass; once they had stripped off their armor and left their horses, they were permitted to enter.

And they said to Gao Gan, "Cao Cao's troops are new to the country and not settled. You ought to fall upon their camp this very evening. If you approve, we will lead the attack."

Gao Gan decided to trust them and prepared to attack, giving the two brothers the leadership of ten thousand soldiers. But as they drew near Cao Cao's camp, a great noise arose behind them, and they found themselves in an ambush, attacked on all sides. Realizing too late that he had been the victim of a ruse, Gao Gan retreated to the pass but found it occupied by Li Dian and Yue Jin. Gao Gan then made the best of his way to the Chieftain of the Xiongnu People. Cao Cao gave orders to hold the passes and sent companies in pursuit.

When Gao Gan reached the boundary of the Xiongnu State, he met Cexian, the Khan of the northern tribespeople.

Gao Gan dismounted and made a low obeisance, saying, "Cao Cao is conquering and absorbing all the borders, and your turn, O King, will come quickly. I pray you help me and let us smite together for the safety of the northern regions."

Ce Xian the Khan replied, "I have no quarrel with Cao Cao. Why, then, should he invade my land? Do you desire to embroil me with him?"

He would have nothing to do with Gao Gan and sent him away. At his wits' end, Gao Gan decided to try to join Liu Biao and got southward so far on his journey as Shanglu, where he was taken prisoner and put to death by Governor Wang Yan. His head was sent to Cao Cao, and Wang Yan received lordship for this service.

Thus, Bingzhou was conquered. Then, Cao Cao began to discuss the overthrow of the Wuhuan State.

Cao Hong, speaking in the name of other officials, said, "The two, Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang, are nearly done for and too weak to be feared. They have fled far into the Sea of Sand. If we pursue them thither, it may bring down Liu Biao and Liu Bei upon the capital. Should we be unable to rescue it, the misfortune would be immense. Wherefore, we beg you to return to Xuchang."

But Guo Jia was of different advice. "You are wrong," said he. "Though the prestige of our lord fills the empire, the peoples of the desert, relying upon their inaccessibility, will not be prepared against us. Wherefore I say attack, and we shall conquer them. Beside, Yuan Shao was kind to the nomads, and the two brothers have been more so. They must be destroyed.

"As for Liu Biao, he is a mere gossip, who needs not cause the least anxiety. And Liu Bei is unfit for any heavy responsibility and will take no trouble over a light one. You may leave the base with perfect safety and make as long an expedition as you choose. Nothing will happen."

"You speak well, O Guo Jia," said Cao Cao.

He led his legions, heavy and light, to the edge of the desert, with many wagons. The expedition marched into the Gobi Desert. The rolling ocean of yellow sand spread its waves before them, and they saw far and near the eddying sand pillars and felt the fierce winds that drove them forward. The road became precipitous and progress difficult. Cao Cao began to think of returning and spoke thereof to Guo Jia, who had advised the journey.

Guo Jia had speedily fallen victim to the effects of the climate, and at this time, he lay in his cart very ill.

Cao Cao's tears fell as he said, "My friend, you are suffering for my ambition to subdue the Gobi Desert. I cannot bear to think you should be ill."

"You have always been very good to me," said the sick man, "and I can never repay what I owe you."

"The country is exceedingly precipitous, and I am thinking of going back. What think you?"

Guo Jia replied, "The success of an expedition of this kind depends upon celerity. To strike a sudden blow on a distant spot with a heavy baggage train is difficult. To ensure success, the need is light troops and a good road to strike quickly before an enemy has time to prepare. Now, you must find guides who know the road well."

Then the sick adviser was left at Yezhou for treatment, and they sought among the natives for some persons to serve as guides. Tian Chou, one of Yuan Shao's old generals, knew those parts well, and Cao Cao called him and questioned him.

Tian Chou said, "Between autumn and summer, this route is underwater, the shallow places too heavy for wheeled traffic, the deep parts

insufficient for boats; it is always difficult. Therefore, you would do better to return and at Lulong cross the Baitan Pass into the desert. Then, advance to Liucheng and smite before there is time to prepare. One sudden rush will settle King Mao Dun.”

For this valuable information and plan, Tian Chou was made General Who Calms the North, and went in advance as leader and guide. Next after him came Zhang Liao, and Cao Cao brought up the rear. They advanced in double marches.

Tian Chou led Zhang Liao to White Wolf Hills, where they came upon Yuan Xi, Yuan Shang, and King Mao Dun and a force of ten thousand cavalry. Zhang Liao galloped to inform his chief, and Cao Cao rode up to the top of an eminence to survey the foe. He saw a large mass of cavalry without any military formation advancing in a disorderly crowd.

Said he, “They have no formation. We can easily rout them.”

Then, he handed over his ensign of command to Zhang Liao who, with Xu Chu, Yu Jin, and Xu Huang, made a vigorous attack from four different points, with the result being that the enemy was thrown into confusion. Zhang Liao rode forward and slew King Mao Dun, and the other generals gave in. Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang with a few thousand horses got away east into Liaodong.

Cao Cao then led his army into Liucheng. For his services, Tian Chou was conferred the rank of Lord of Liucheng and Commander of that county.

But Tian Chou declined the rank, saying with tears, “I am a renegade and a fugitive. It is my good fortune that you spared my life, but how can I accept a rank for betraying Lulong? I would rather die than accept the lordship.”

Cao Cao recognized that reason was on Tian Chou's side and conferred upon him the office of Court Counselor. Cao Cao then pacified the Xiongnu Chieftains, collected a large number of horses, and at once set out on the homeward march.

The season was winter, cold and dry. For seventy miles there was no water, and grain also was scanty. The troops fed on horse flesh. They had to dig very deep, three or four hundred spans, to find water.

When Cao Cao reached Yezhou, he rewarded those who had remonstrated with him against the expedition.

He said, "I took some risk in going so far, but by good fortune I have succeeded. With the aid of Heaven, I have secured victory. I could not be guided by your advice, but still they were counsels of safety, and therefore, I reward you to prove my appreciation of advice and that hereafter you may not fear to speak your minds."

Adviser Guo Jia did not live to see the return of his lord. His coffin was placed on the bier in a hall of the government offices, and Cao Cao went thither to sacrifice to his manes.

Cao Cao mourned for him, crying, "Alas! Heaven has smitten me: Guo Jia is dead!"

Then, turning to his officers, he said, "You, gentlemen, are of the same age as myself, but he was very young to die. I needed him for the future generation, but unhappily he has been torn from me in the flower of his age. My heart and my bowels are torn with grief."

The servants of the late adviser presented his last testament, which they said his dying hand had written, and he had told them to say, "If the Prime Minister shall follow the advice given herein, then Liaodong will be secure."

Cao Cao opened the cover and read, nodding his head in agreement and uttering deep sighs. But no other person knew what was written therein.

Shortly after, Xiahou Dun at the head of a delegation presented a petition, saying, "For a long time the Governor of Liaodong, Gongsun Kang, has been contumacious, and it bodes ill for peace that the Yuan brothers have fled to him. Would it not be well to attack before they move against you?"

"I need not trouble your tiger courage, Sirs," said Cao Cao, smiling. "Wait a few days, and you will see the heads of our two enemies sent to me."

They could not believe it.

As has been related, Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang escaped to the east with a few hundreds of horsemen. The Governor of Liaodong was a son of Gongsun Du the Warlike, a General of Han. Gongsun Kang was a native of Xiangping. When he heard that Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang were on their way to his territory, he called a council to decide upon his plan.

At the council, Gongsun Gong rose, saying, "When Yuan Shao was alive, he nourished the plan of adding this territory to his own. Now, his sons, homeless with a broken army and no officers, are coming here. It seems to me like the dove stealing the magpie's nest. If we offer them shelter, they will assuredly intrigue against us. I advise that they be inveigled into the city, put to death, and their heads sent to Cao Cao, who will be most grateful to us."

Said the Governor, Gongsun Kang, "I have one fear: Cao Cao will come against us. If so, it would be better to have the help of the Yuans

against him.”

“Then you can send spies to ascertain whether Cao Cao’s army is preparing to attack us. If it is, then save the Yuans alive; if not, then follow my advice.”

It was decided to wait till the spies came back.

In the meantime, Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang had taken counsel together as they approached Liaodong, saying, “Liaodong has a large army, strong enough to oppose Cao Cao. We will go thither and submit till we can slay the Governor and take possession. Then, when we are strong enough, we will attack and recover our own land.”

With these intentions, they went into the city. They were received and lodged in the guests’ quarters. But when they wished to see Gongsun Kang, he put them off with the excuse of indisposition.

However, before many days, the spies returned with the news that Cao Cao’s army was quiescent and there was no hint of any attack.

Then, Gongsun Kang called Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang into his presence. But before they came, he hid swordsmen and ax-men behind the arras in the hall. When the visitors came and had made their salutations, Gongsun Kang bade them be seated.

Now it was bitterly cold and on the couches where they were sitting were no coverings. So Yuan Shang said, “May we have cushions?”

The host said, “When your heads take that long, long journey, will there be any cushions?” Before Yuan Shang could recover from his fright, Gongsun Kang shouted, “Why do you not begin?”

At this, out rushed the assassins, and the heads of the two brothers were cut off as they sat. Packed in a small wooden box, they were sent to Cao Cao at Yezhou.

All this time, Cao Cao had been calmly waiting. His impatient officers had petitioned as a body, saying, “Let’s march to the capital to ward off Liu Biao’s threat if we are not going to attack the east.”

Cao Cao said, “I am waiting for the heads of the enemy. We will go as soon as the heads arrive.”

In their secret hearts, they laughed. But then, surely enough, a messenger soon came from Liaodong bringing the heads. Then they were greatly surprised.

And when the messenger presented Gongsun Kang’s letters, Cao Cao cried, “Just as Guo Jia said!”

He amply rewarded the messenger, and the Governor of Liaodong was made Lord of Xiangping and General of the Left Army. When the officers asked what had happened, Cao Cao told them what the late adviser had predicted. He read to them the dead officer’s testament, which ran something like this:

“Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang are going to Liaodong. Illustrious Sir, you are on no account to attack, for Gongsun Kang has long lived in fear lest the Yuans should absorb his country. When they arrive, Gongsun Kang will hesitate. If you attack, he will save the Yuans to help him; if you wait, they will work against each other. This is evident.”

The officers simply jumped with surprise to see how perfectly events had been foreseen. Then, Cao Cao, at the head of all his officers, performed a grand sacrifice before the coffin of the wise Guo Jia. He had died at the

age of thirty-eight, after eleven years of meritorious and wonderful service in wars.



When Heaven permitted Guo Jia's birth,
It made him ablest man on earth.
He knew by rote all histories,
From him war kept no mysteries.
Like Fan Li's, his plans were quite decisive,
As Chen Ping's, his strokes were most incisive.
Too soon he ran his earthly race,
Too soon the great beam fell from place.



When Cao Cao returned to Jizhou, he sent off the coffin of his late adviser to Capital Xuchang, where it was interred.

Then, Cheng Yu and others said, "As the north has been overcome, it is time to settle the south."

Cao Cao was pleased and said, "That has long occupied my thoughts."

The last night he spent in Jizhou, Cao Cao went to the eastern corner tower and stood there regarding the sky. His only companion was Xun You.

Presently, Cao Cao said, "That is a very brilliant glow there in the south. It seems too strong for me to do anything there."

"What is there that can oppose your heaven-high prestige?" said Xun You.

Suddenly, a beam of golden light shot up out of the earth.

“Surely, a treasure is buried there,” remarked Xun You.

They went down from the city wall, called some guards, and led them to the point whence the light proceeded. There, the men were ordered to dig.

The southern skies with portents glow,
The northern lands their treasures show.

What the diggers found will appear in the next chapter.



END OF ACT VIII

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT IX:

SHAN FU AND THE SLEEPING DRAGON:
LIU BEI GAINS LEGENDARY ADVISERS

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IX

CHAPTER 34

BEHIND THE SCREEN, LADY CAI OVERHEARS A SECRET; ACROSS THE
TAN TORRENT, THE DILU HORSE CARRIES ITS MASTER.

The diggers at the spot whence the golden light proceeded presently unearthed a bronze bird. Looking at it, Cao Cao turned to his companion, saying, "What is the portent?"

"You will remember that the mother of the praiseworthy King Shun dreamed of a jade bird before his birth, so certainly it is a felicitous omen," said Xun You.

Cao Cao was very pleased, and he ordered forthwith the building of a lofty tower to celebrate the find, and they began to dig foundations and cut timber, to burn tiles and to smooth bricks, for the Bronze Bird Tower on the banks of the River Zhang. Cao Cao set a year for the building.

His younger son, Cao Zhi, said, "If you build a terraced tower, you should add two others, one on each side. The center tower, as the tallest, should be called the Bronze Bird Tower, the side towers named Jade Dragon Tower and Golden Phoenix Tower. Then connect these by flying bridges, and the effect will be noble."

"My son, your words are very good; and by and by, when the building is complete, I can solace my old age therein."

Cao Cao had five sons, but this one, Cao Zhi, was the most clever and his essays were particularly elegant. His father was very fond of him, and, seeing that the young man took an interest in the building, Cao Cao left him with his elder brother Cao Pi at Yejun to superintend the work, while he led

a half-a-million army that had recently been captured from the Yuans back to Capital Xuchang.

When he arrived, he distributed rewards liberally and memorialized the Throne obtaining the title of the Pure Lord for the late Guo Jia. And he took Guo Jia's son, Guo Ye, to be brought up in his own family.

Next, Cao Cao began to consider the reduction of Liu Biao's power.

Xun You said, "The Grand Army has only just returned from the north and needs rest. Wait half a year that the soldiers may recover from the fatigue of the campaign, and both Liu Biao and Sun Quan will fall at the first roll of the drums."

Presently, Cao Cao approved of this plan. To enrich his troops, he assigned certain lands to them to till while they rested.

In Jingzhou, Liu Biao had been very generous to Liu Bei ever since he had come as a fugitive seeking shelter. One day at a banquet, there came news that two generals, Zhang Wu and Chen Sun, who had tendered their submission, had suddenly begun plundering the people in Jiangxia. They evidently meant rebellion.

"If they really rebel, it will cause a lot of trouble," said Liu Biao, rather dismayed.

"Do not let that trouble you. I will go and settle it," said Liu Bei.

Pleased with this proposal, Liu Biao told off thirty thousand troops and placed them under his friend, and the army marched as soon as the orders were issued. In a short time, it reached the scene, and the two malcontents came out to fight. Liu Bei, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun took their stand beneath the great banner and looked over at the enemy.

Zhang Wu was riding a handsome prancing horse, and Liu Bei said, "He certainly has a fine steed."

As he spoke, Zhao Yun galloped out with his spear set and dashed toward the enemy. Zhang Wu came out to meet him, but the combat was very brief, for Zhang Wu was soon killed by a spear thrust. Thereupon, Zhao Yun laid a hand upon the bridle of the fallen man's horse to lead it back to his own side.

The slain rebel's companion, Chen Sun, at once rode after Zhao Yun, whereupon Zhang Fei uttered a loud shout and rode out to meet him. With one thrust, Zhang Fei slew the rebel. Their followers now scattered, and Liu Bei speedily restored order in Jiangxia and returned to Jingzhou City.

Liu Biao, grateful for this service, rode out to the boundary to welcome the victors. They reentered the city, and grand banquets were instituted at which they emptied great goblets in congratulations over the victory.

At one of these banquets, the Imperial Protector said, "With such heroism as my brother has shown, Jingzhou has one upon whom to rely. But a source of sorrow is the borders with the lands of Yue, Wu, and Shu, from which a raid may come at any time. Zhang Lu of Shu and Sun Quan of Yue and Wu are to be feared."

"But I have three bold generals," said Liu Bei, "quite equal to any task you can set them. Send Zhang Fei to keep ward on the southern border of Yue, Guan Yu to guard the city of Guzi against Zhang Lu in the west, and Zhao Yun, holding the Three Gorges, will protect you from Sun Quan. Why need you grieve?"

The scheme appealed strongly to the Imperial Protector, but Cai Mao did not approve. So he spoke to his sister, Liu Biao's wife, saying, "Liu Bei

is putting his troops in such commanding positions all round the region. That is the danger.”

Lady Cai, thus influenced by her brother, undertook to remonstrate, and that night began by saying to Liu Biao, “Some in the Jingzhou army seem to have a great liking for Liu Bei. They are always coming and going. You ought to take precautions. I do not think you should let Liu Bei stay in the city. Why not send him on some mission?”

“Liu Bei is a good man,” replied the Imperial Protector.

“I think others differ from you,” said the lady.

Liu Biao said nothing but muttered to himself. Soon after, he went out of the city to see Liu Bei and noticed he was riding a very handsome horse. They told him it was a prize taken from the recently conquered rebels, and as he praised it very warmly, Liu Bei presented it to him. Liu Biao was delighted and rode it back to the city. Kuai Yue saw it and asked where it had come from. The Imperial Protector told him it was a gift from Liu Bei.

Kuai Yue said, “My passed-away brother, Kuai Liang, knew horses very well, and I am not a bad judge. This horse has tear-tracks running down from its eyes and a white blaze on its forehead. It is called a Dilu horse, and it is a danger to its master. That is why Zhang Wu was killed. I advise you not to ride it.”

Liu Biao began to think.

Soon after he asked Liu Bei to a banquet and in the course of it said, “You kindly presented me with a horse lately, and I am most grateful. But you may need it on some of your expeditions, and if you do not mind, I would like to return it.”

Liu Bei rose and thanked him.

The Imperial Protector continued, “You have been here a long time, and I fear I am spoiling your career as a warrior. Now Xinye in Xiangyang is no poverty-stricken town. How would you like to garrison it with your own troops?”

Liu Bei naturally took the offer as a command and set out as soon as he could, taking leave of the Imperial Protector the next day. And so he took up his quarters in Xinye.

When he left Jingzhou City, he noticed in the gate a person making him emphatic salutations, and the man presently said, “You should not ride that horse.”

Liu Bei looked at the man and recognized in the speaker one of the secretaries of Liu Biao named Yi Ji, a native of Shanyang. So Liu Bei hastily dismounted and asked why.

Yi Ji replied, “Yesterday, I heard that Kuai Yue told the Imperial Protector that that horse was a Dilu horse and brought disaster to its owner. That is why it was returned to you. How can you mount it again?”

“I am deeply touched by your affection,” replied Liu Bei, “but a person’s life is governed by fate, and what horse can interfere with that?”

Yi Ji admitted his superior view, and thereafter, he kept in touch with Liu Bei wherever he went.

The arrival of Liu Bei in Xinye was a matter of rejoicing to all the inhabitants, and the whole administration was reformed.

In the spring of the twelfth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 207), Liu Bei’s wife, Lady Gan, gave birth to a son who was named Liu Shan. The night of

his birth, a crane settled on the roof of the house, screeched some forty times, and then flew away westward.

Just at the time of birth, a miraculous incense filled the chamber. Lady Gan, one night, had dreamed that she was looking up at the sky, and the constellation of the Great Bear had fallen down her throat. And she conceived soon after.

While Cao Cao was absent from the capital on his northern expedition, Liu Bei went to Liu Biao and said to him, "Why do you not take this opportunity to march against the capital? An empire might follow from that."

"I am well placed here," was the reply. "Why should I attempt other things?"

Liu Bei said no more. Then, the Imperial Protector invited him into the private apartments to drink. While they were so engaged, Liu Biao suddenly began to sigh despondently.

"O brother, why do you sigh thus?" asked Liu Bei.

"I have a secret sorrow that is difficult to speak about," said Liu Biao.

Liu Bei was on the point of asking what it was when Lady Cai came and stood behind the screen, whereat Liu Biao hung his head and became silent. Before long, host and guest bade each other farewell, and Liu Bei went back to his own place at Xinye.

That winter, they heard that Cao Cao had returned from Liucheng, and Liu Bei sighed when he reflected that his friend had paid no heed to his advice.

Unexpectedly, a messenger came from the capital city with a request that Liu Bei would go thither to consult with the Imperial Protector. So he started at once with the messenger to Jingzhou City. He was received very kindly, and when the salutations were over, the two men went into the private quarters at the rear to dine.

Presently, Liu Biao said, "Cao Cao has returned, and he is stronger than ever. I am afraid he means to absorb this region. I am sorry I did not follow your advice, for I have missed an opportunity."

"In this period of disruption, with strife on every side, one cannot pretend that there will be no more opportunities. If you only take what that offers, there will be nothing to regret."

"What you say, brother, is quite to the point," replied Liu Biao.

They drank on for a time till presently Liu Bei noticed that his host was weeping, and when he asked the cause of these tears, Liu Biao replied, "It is that secret sorrow I spoke of to you before. I wished to tell you, but there was no opportunity that day."

"O brother, what difficulty have you, and can I assist you? I am entirely at your service."

"My first wife, of the Chen family, bore me a son Liu Qi, my eldest. He grew up virtuous but weakly, and unfitted to succeed me in my office. Later, I took a wife of the Cai family, who bore me a son named Liu Cong fairly intelligent. If I pass over the elder in favor of the younger, there is the breach of the rule of primogeniture. But if I follow law and custom, there are the intrigues of the Cai family and clan to be reckoned with. Further, the army is in the hollow of their hands. There will be trouble, and I cannot decide what to do."

Liu Bei said, "All experience proves that to set aside the elder for the younger is to take the way of confusion. If you fear the power of the Cai faction, then gradually reduce its power and influence, but do not let doting affection lead you into making the younger your heir."

Liu Biao pondered silently.

But Lady Cai had had a suspicion as to why her lord had summoned Liu Bei and what was the subject of discussion, so she had determined to listen secretly. She was behind the screen when the matter was talked over, and she conceived deep resentment against Liu Bei for what he had said.

On his side, Liu Bei felt that his advice had fallen upon a forbidden subject, and he arose and walked across the room. As he did so, he noticed that he was getting heavy and stiff, and a furtive tear stole down his cheek as he thought of the past. When he returned and sat down, his host noticed the traces of weeping and asked the cause of his sorrow.

"In the past, I was always in the saddle, and I was slender and lithe. Now, it is so long since I rode that I am getting stout, and the days and months are slipping by...wasted. I shall have old age on me in no time, and I have accomplished nothing. So I am sad."

"I have heard a story that when you were at Xuchang at the season of green plums, you and Cao Cao were discussing heroes. You mentioned this name and that to him as humans of parts, and he rejected everyone of them. Finally, he said that you and he were the only two persons of real worth in the whole empire. If he with all his power and authority did not dare to place himself in front of you, I do not think you need grieve about having accomplished nothing."

At this flattering speech, Liu Bei, as wine was getting the better of him and in a half-maudlin manner, replied, "If I only had a starting point, then I would not be afraid of anyone in a world full of fools."

His host said no more, and the guest, feeling that he had slipped up in speech, rose as if drunk, took leave, and staggered out, saying he must return to his lodging to recover.



The episode has been celebrated in a poem:

When with crooking fingers counting,
Cao Cao reckoned up the forceful
Humans of real determination,
Only two he found; and one was
Liu Bei. But by inaction
He had grown both fat and slothful;
Yet the months and years in passing
Fretted him with naught accomplished.



Though Liu Biao kept silent when he heard the words of Liu Bei, he felt the more uneasy. After the departure of his guest, he retired into the inner quarters, where he met his wife.

Lady Cai said, “I happened to be behind the screen just now and so heard the words of Liu Bei. They betray scant regard for other people and mean that he would take your territory if he could. If you do not remove him, it will go ill for you.”

Her husband made no reply, but only shook his head.

Then, Lady Cai took counsel with her kinsman Cai Mao, who said, “Let me go to the guest-house and slay him forthwith, and we can report

what we have done.”

His sister consented, and he went out and, that night, told off a party of soldiers to do the foul deed.

Now Liu Bei sat in his lodging by the light of a single candle till about the third bell, when he prepared to retire to bed. He was startled by a knock at his door and in came Yi Ji, who had heard of the plot against his new master and had come in the darkness to warn him. He related the details of the plot and urged speedy departure.

“I have not said farewell to my host. How can I go away?” said Liu Bei.

“If you go to bid him farewell, you will fall a victim to the Cai faction,” said Yi Ji.

So Liu Bei said a hasty goodbye to his friend, called up his escort, and they all mounted and rode away by the light of the stars toward Xinye. Soon after they had left, the soldiers arrived at the guest-house, but their intended victim was already well on his way.

Naturally, the failure of the plot chagrined the treacherous Cai Mao, but he took the occasion to scribble some calumnious verses on one of the partitions.

Then, he went to see Liu Biao, to whom he said, “Liu Bei has treacherous intentions, as can be seen from some lines written on the wall. And his hurried departure is suspicious.”

Liu Biao felt doubtful, but he went to the guest-house and there on the wall, he read this poem:

Too long, far too long I have dreamed life away,
Gazing at scenery day after day.
A dragon can never be kept in a pond,

He should ride on the thunder to heaven and beyond.

Greatly angered by what he read, Liu Biao drew his sword and swore to slay the writer. But before he had gone many paces, his anger had already died down, and he said to himself, "I have seen much of the man, but have never known him write verses. This is the handiwork of someone who wishes to sow discord between us."

So saying, he turned back and, with the point of his sword, scraped away the poem. Then, putting up his sword, he mounted and rode home.

By and by, Cai Mao reminded him, saying, "The soldiers are awaiting your orders to go to Xinye and arrest Liu Bei."

"There is no hurry," he replied.

Cai Mao saw his brother-in-law's hesitation and again sought his sister.

She said, "Soon there is to be the great gathering at Xiangyang, and we can arrange something for that day."

Next day, Cai Mao petitioned the Imperial Protector, saying, "We have had several fruitful harvests recently. I pray you, Sir, attend the Full Harvest Festival at Xiangyang. It would be an encouragement to the people."

"I have been feeling my old trouble lately. I certainly cannot go," replied he, "but my two sons can go to represent me and to receive the guests."

"They are full young," replied Cai Mao. "They may make some mistakes."

"Then go to Xinye and request Liu Bei to receive the guests," said Liu Biao.

Nothing could have pleased Cai Mao more, for this would bring Liu Bei within reach of his plot. Without loss of time, he sent to Liu Bei,

requesting him to go to preside at the Festival.

It has been said that Liu Bei made the best of his way home to Xinye. He felt that he had offended by that slip in speech, but determined to keep silence about it and attempt no explanation. So he discussed it with nobody.

Then came the message asking him to preside at the Festival, and he needed counsel.

Sun Qian said, "You have seemed worried and preoccupied lately, and I think something untoward happened at Jingzhou. You should consider well before you accept this invitation."

Thereupon, Liu Bei told his confidants the whole story.

Guan Yu said, "You yourself think your speech offended the Imperial Protector, but he said nothing to show displeasure. You need pay no attention to the babble of outsiders like Yi Ji. Xiangyang is quite near, and if you do not go, Liu Biao will begin to suspect something really is wrong."

"You speak well," said Liu Bei.

Said Zhang Fei, "Banquets are no good; gatherings are no better. It is best not to go."

"Let me take three hundred horse and foot as escort; there will be no trouble then," said Zhao Yun.

"That is the best course," said Liu Bei.

They soon set out for the gathering place, and Cai Mao met them at the boundary and was most affable and courteous. Soon arrived the Imperial Protector's sons at the head of a great company of officers, civil and military. Their appearance put Liu Bei more at ease. He was conducted to

the guest-house, and Zhao Yun posted his men so as to guard it completely, while he himself, armed, remained close to his chief.

Liu Qi said to Liu Bei, "My father is feeling unwell and could not come, wherefore he begs you, Uncle Liu Bei, to preside at the various ceremonies and give encouragement to the officers who administer the region."

"Really, I am unfit for such responsibilities," said Liu Bei. "But my brother's command must be obeyed."

Next day, it was reported that the officials from forty-two counties of nine territories of Jingzhou had all arrived.

Then, Cai Mao said to Kuai Yue, "This Liu Bei is the villain of the age and, if left alive, will certainly work harm to us. He must be got rid of now."

"I fear you would forfeit everybody's favor if you harmed him," replied Kuai Yue.

"I have already secretly spoken in these terms to the Imperial Protector," said Cai Mao, "and I have his word here."

"So it may be regarded as settled. Then we can prepare."

Cai Mao added, "My brothers are ready. Cai He is posted on the road to the Xian Hills from the east gate; Cai Zhong and Cai Xun are on the north and south roads. No guard is needed on the west, as the Tan Torrent is quite safeguard enough. Even with legions, Liu Bei could not get over that."

Kuai Yue replied, "I notice that Zhao Yun never leaves him. I feel sure he expects some attack."

"I have placed five hundred men in ambush in the city."

"We will tell Wen Ping and Wang Wei to invite all the military officers to a banquet at one of the pavilions outside the city, and Zhao Yun will be

among them. Then will be our opportunity.”

Cai Mao thought this a good device for getting Zhao Yun out of the way.

Now oxen and horses had been slaughtered and a grand banquet prepared. Liu Bei rode to the residence on the horse of ill omen, and when he arrived, the steed was led into the back part of the enclosure and tethered there. Soon, the guests arrived, and Liu Bei took his place as master of the feast, with the two sons of the Imperial Protector, one on each side. The guests were all arranged in order of rank. Zhao Yun stood near his lord, sword in hand, as a faithful henchman should do.

Then, Wen Ping and Wang Wei came to invite Zhao Yun to the banquet they had prepared for the military officers. But he declined. However, Liu Bei told him to go, and, after some demur, he went. Then, Cai Mao perfected his final arrangements, placing his people surrounding the place like a ring of iron. The three hundred guards that formed the escort of Liu Bei were sent away to the guest-house.

All were ready and awaiting the signal. At the third course, Yi Ji took a goblet of wine in his hands and approached Liu Bei, at the same time giving him a meaningful look. Then, in a low voice he said, “Make an excuse to get away.”

Liu Bei understood and presently rose and went to the inner chamber, and then he went to the backyard. There, he found Yi Ji, who had gone thither after presenting the cup of wine.

Yi Ji then told him, saying, “Cai Mao plots to kill you, and all the roads have been guarded except that to the west. My lord, you must lose no

time to depart.”

Liu Bei was quite taken aback. However, he got hold of the Dilu horse, opened the door of the garden, and led it out. Then, he took a flying leap into the saddle and galloped off without waiting for the escort. He made for the west gate. At the gate, the wardens wanted to question him, but he only whipped up his steed and rode through. The guards at the gate ran off to report to Cai Mao, who quickly went in pursuit with five hundred soldiers.

As has been said, Liu Bei burst out at the west gate. Before he had gone far, there rolled before him a river barring the way. It was the Tan Torrent, many score spans in width, which pours its waters into the River Xiang. Its current was very swift.

Liu Bei reached the bank and saw the river was unfordable. So he turned his horse and rode back. Then, not far off, he saw a cloud of dust and knew that his pursuers were therein. He thought that it was all over. However, he turned again toward the swift river, and seeing the soldiers now quite near, plunged into the stream. A few paces, and he felt the horse's fore legs floundering in front, while the water rose over the skirt of his robe.

Then he plied the whip furiously, crying, “Dilu, Dilu, why betray me?”

Whereupon, the good steed suddenly reared up out of the water and, with one tremendous leap, was on the western bank. Liu Bei felt as if he had come out of the clouds.



In latter years, the famous court official, Su Dongpo, wrote a poem on this leap over the Tan Torrent:

I'm growing old, the leaves are sere,
My sun slopes westward, soon will sink,
And I recall that yesteryear
I wandered by Tan River brink.
Irresolute, anon I paused,
Anon advanced, and gazed around,
I marked the autumn's reddened leaves,
And watched them eddying to the ground.
I thought of all the mighty deeds
Of him who set the House of Han
On high, and all the struggles since,
The battlefields, the blood that ran.
I saw the nobles gathered round
The board, set in the Banquet Hall;
Amid them, one, above whose head
There hung a sword about to fall.
I saw him quit that festive throng
And westward ride, a lonely way;
I saw a squadron follow swift,
Intent the fugitive to slay.
I saw him reach the River Tan,
Whose swirling current rushes by;
Adown the bank he galloped fast,
"Now leap, my steed!" I heard him cry.
His steed's hoofs churn the swollen stream;
What chills he that the waves run high?

He hears the sound of clashing steel,
Of thundering squadrons coming nigh.
And upward from the foaming waves
I saw two peerless beings soar;
One was a destined western king,
And him another dragon bore.
The Tan still rolls from east to west.
Its roaring torrent never dry.
Those dragons twain, ah! Where are they?
Yes, where? But there is no reply.
The setting sun, in dark relief
Against the glowing western sky.
Throws out the everlasting hills
While, saddened, here I stand and sigh.
Humans died to found the kingdoms three,
Which now as misty dreams remain.
Of greatest deeds the traces oft
Are faint that fleeting years retain.



Thus Liu Bei crossed the rolling river. Then, he turned and looked back at the other bank which his pursuers had just gained.

“Why did you run sway from the feast?” called out Cai Mao.

“Why did you wish to harm a person who has done you no injury?” replied Liu Bei.

“I have never thought of such a thing. Do not listen to what people say to you.”

But Liu Bei saw that his enemy was fitting an arrow to his bowstring, so he whipped up his steed and rode away southwest.

“What spirits aided him?” said Cai Mao to his followers.

Then, Cai Mao turned to go back to the city, but in the gate he saw Zhao Yun coming out at the head of his company of guards.

By wondrous leap the dragon steed his rider's life
could save,
Now follows him, on vengeance bent, his master's
henchman brave.

The next chapters will tell what fate befell the traitor.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IX

CHAPTER 35

LIU BEI MEETS A RECLUSE AT NANZHANG; SHAN FU SEES A NOBLE LORD AT XINYE.

Just as Cai Mao was going into the city, he met Zhao Yun and his three hundred coming out. It happened that, while at the banquet, Zhao Yun had noticed some movement of soldiers and horses and had, at once, gone to the banquet hall to see if all was well with his lord.

Missing Liu Bei from his place, Zhao Yun became anxious and gone to the guesthouse. There, he heard that Cai Mao had gone off to the west gate with troops. So he quickly took his spear, mounted, and went, he and the escort, in hot haste along the same road.

Meeting Cai Mao near the gate, he said, "Where is my lord?"

"He left the banquet hall quite suddenly, and I know not whither he has gone," was the reply.

Now Zhao Yun was cautious and careful and had no desire to act hastily, so he urged his horse forward till he came to the river. There, he was checked by a torrent without ford or bridge.

At once, he turned back and shouted after Cai Mao, "You invited my lord to a feast. What means this going after him with a squadron of horses?"

Cai Mao replied, "It is my duty to guard the officials of forty-two counties who have assembled here, as I am the Chief Commander."

"Whither have you driven my lord?" asked Zhao Yun.

“They tell me he rode quite alone out through the west gate, but I have not seen him.”

Zhao Yun was anxious and doubtful. Again he rode to the river and looked around. This time, he noticed a wet track on the farther side. He thought to himself that it was almost an impossible crossing for a person and a horse, so he ordered his followers to scatter and search. But they also could find no trace of Liu Bei.

Zhao Yun turned again to the city. By the time he had reached the wall, Cai Mao had gone within. He then questioned the gate wardens, and they all agreed in saying that Liu Bei had ridden out at full gallop. That was all they knew. Fearing to reenter the city lest he should fall into an ambush, Zhao Yun started for Xinye.

After that marvelous life-saving leap over the Tan Torrent, Liu Bei felt elated but rather dazed.

He could not help telling himself, “My safety is due to an especial interposition of Providence.”

Following a tortuous path, he urged his steed toward Nanzhang. But the sun sank to the west and his destination seemed yet a long way off. Then, he saw a young cowherd seated on the back of a buffalo and playing on a short flute.

“If I were only as happy!” sighed Liu Bei.

He checked his horse and looked at the lad, who stopped his beast, ceased playing on the pipe, and stared fixedly at the stranger.

“You must be Liu Bei, the general who fought the Yellow Scarves,” said the boy presently.

Liu Bei was taken aback. "How can you know my name, a young rustic like you living in such a secluded place?" said he.

"Of course, I do not know you, but my master often has visitors, and they all talk about Liu Bei, the tall man whose hands hang down below his knees and whose eyes are very prominent. They say he is the most famous man of the day. Now you, General, are just such a man as they talk about, and surely you are he."

"Well, who is your master?"

"My master's name is Sima Hui. He belongs to Yingchuan, and his Daoist appellation is Water Mirror."

"Who are your master's friends that you mentioned?"

"They are Pang Degong and Pang Tong of Xiangyang."

"And who are they?"

"Uncle and nephew. Pang Degong is ten years older than my master; the other is five years younger. One day, my master was up in a tree, picking mulberries, when Pang Tong arrived. They began to talk and kept it up all day; my master did not come down till the evening. My master is very fond of Pang Tong and calls him 'Brother.'"

"And where does your master live?"

"In that wood there, in front," said the cowherd, pointing to it. "There, he has a farmstead."

"I really am Liu Bei, and you might lead me to your master that I may salute him."

The cowherd led the way for about one mile, when Liu Bei found himself in front of a farmhouse. He dismounted and went to the center door. Suddenly, came to his ear the sound of a lute most skillfully played, and the

air was extremely beautiful. He stopped his guide and would not allow him to announce a visitor, but stood there rapt by the melody.

Suddenly, the music ceased.

He heard a deep laugh, and a man appeared, saying, "Amidst the clear and subtle sounds of the lute, there suddenly rang out a high note as though some noble man were near."

"That is my master," said the lad, pointing.

Liu Bei saw before him a figure slender and straight as a pine tree, a very saintlike being. Hastening forward, he saluted. The skirt of his robe was still wet from the river.

"You have escaped from a grave danger today, Sir," said Water Mirror.

Liu Bei was startled into silence, and the cowherd said to his master, "This is Liu Bei."

Water Mirror asked him to enter, and when they were seated in their relative positions as host and guest, Liu Bei glanced round the room. Upon the bookshelves were piled books and manuscripts. The window opened upon an exquisite picture of pines and bamboos, and a lute lay upon a stone couch. The room showed refinement in its last degree.

"Whence come you, Illustrious Sir?" asked the host.

"By chance, I was passing this way, and the lad pointed you out to me. So I came to bow in your honored presence. I cannot tell what pleasure it gives me."

Water Mirror laughed, saying, "Why this mystery? Why must you conceal the truth? You have certainly just escaped from a grave danger."

Then, Liu Bei told the story of the banquet and the flight.

"I knew it all from your appearance," said his host. "Your name has long been familiar, but whence comes it that, up to the present, you are only

a homeless devil?”

“I have suffered many a check during my life,” said Liu Bei, “and through one of them am I here now.”

“It should not be so. But the reason is that you still lack the one person to aid you.”

“I am simple enough in myself, I know. But I have Sun Qian, Mi Zhu, and Jian Yong on the civil side, and for warriors, I have Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun. These are all most loyal helpers, and I depend upon them more than a little.”

“Your fighting generals are good, fit to oppose a legion. The pity is you have no really able adviser. Your civilians are but pallid students of books, not people fitted to weave and control destiny.”

“I have always yearned to find one of those marvelous recluses who live among the hills till their day arrive. So far, I have sought in vain.”

“You know what the Teacher Confucius said: ‘In a hamlet of ten households, there must be one true person.’ Can you say there is no one?”

“I am simple and uninstructed. I pray you enlighten me.”

“You have heard what the street children sing:

“In eight and nine years begins decay,
Four years, then comes the fateful day,
When destiny will show the way,
And the dragon flies out of the mire!

“This song was first heard when the new reign style was adopted. The first line was fulfilled when Imperial Protector Liu Biao lost his first wife and when his family troubles began. The next line relates to the approaching death of Liu Biao, and there is not a single person among all his crowd of

officers who has the least ability. The last two lines will be fulfilled in you, General.”

Liu Bei started up in surprise, crying, “How could such a thing be?”

Water Mirror continued, “At this moment, the marvelously clever people of the earth are all here, and you, Sir, ought to seek them.”

“Where are they? Who are they?” said Liu Bei, quickly.

“If you could find either Sleeping Dragon or Young Phoenix, you could restore order in the empire.”

“But who are these two?”

His host clapped his hands, smiled, and said, “Good, very good!”

When Liu Bei persisted and pressed home his questions, Water Mirror said, “It is getting late. You might stay the night here, General, and we will talk over these things tomorrow.”

He called to a lad to bring wine and food for his guest, and his horse was taken to the stable and fed. After Liu Bei had eaten, he was shown to a chamber opening off the main room and went to bed. But the words of his host would not be banished, and he lay there only dozing till far into the night.

Suddenly, he became fully awake at the sound of a knock at the door and a person entering. And he heard his host say, “Where are you from?”

Liu Bei rose from his couch and listened secretly.

He heard the visitor reply, “It has long been said that Liu Biao treated good people and bad people as they each should be treated. So I went to see for myself. But that reputation is undeserved: he does treat good people correctly, but he cannot use them, and he treats wicked people in the right way, all but dismissing them. So I left a letter for him and went away. And here I am.”

Water Mirror replied, "You, capable enough to be the adviser of a king, ought to be able to find someone fit to serve. Why did you cheapen yourself so far as to go to Liu Biao? Beside, there is a real hero right under your eyes and you do not know him."

"It is just as you say," replied the stranger.

Liu Bei listened with great joy, for he thought this visitor was certainly one of the two he was advised to look for. Liu Bei would have shown himself then and there, but he thought that would look strange. So he waited till daylight, when he sought out his host.

"Who was it came last night?" said Liu Bei.

"A friend of mine," was the reply.

Liu Bei begged for an introduction. Water Mirror said, "He wants to find an enlightened master, and so he has gone elsewhere."

When Liu Bei asked his name, his host only replied, "Good, good!" And when Liu Bei asked who they were who went by the names of Sleeping Dragon and Young Phoenix, he only elicited the same reply.

Liu Bei then, bowing low before his host, begged him to leave the hills and help him to bring about the restoration of the ruling house to its prerogatives.

But Water Mirror replied, "People of the hills and woods are unequal to such a task. However, there must be many far abler than I who will help you if you seek them."

While they were talking, they heard outside the farm the shouts of troops and neighing of horses, and a servant came in to say that a general with a large company of soldiers had arrived. Liu Bei went out hastily to see who these were and found Zhao Yun. He was much relieved, and Zhao Yun dismounted and entered the house.

“Last night, on my return to Xinye,” said Zhao Yun, “I could not find you, my lord, so I followed at once and traced you here. I pray you return quickly, as I fear an attack on the city.”

So Liu Bei took leave of his host, and the whole company returned to Xinye. Before they had gone far, another army appeared, and, when they had come nearer, they saw Guan Yu and Zhang Fei. They met with great joy, and Liu Bei told them of the wonderful leap his horse had made over the torrent. All expressed surprise and pleasure.

As soon as they reached the city, a council was called, and Zhao Yun said, “You ought, first of all, to indite a letter to Liu Biao telling him all these things.”

The letter was prepared, and Sun Qian bore it to the seat of government in Jingzhou City. He was received, and Liu Biao at once asked the reason of Liu Bei’s hasty flight from the festival. Whereupon, the letter was presented, and the bearer related the machinations of Cai Mao and told of the escape and the amazing leap over the Tan Torrent.

Liu Biao was very angry, sent for Cai Mao, and berated him soundly, saying, “How dare you try to hurt my brother?”

And he ordered Cai Mao out to execution.

Liu Biao’s wife—Cai Mao’s sister—prayed for a remission of the death penalty, but Liu Biao refused to be appeased.

Then, spoke Sun Qian, saying, “If you put Cai Mao to death, I fear Uncle Liu Bei will be unable to remain here.”

Then Cai Mao was reprieved but dismissed with a severe reprimand.

Liu Biao sent his elder son, Liu Qi, back with Sun Qian to apologize. When Liu Qi reached Xinye, Liu Bei welcomed him and gave a banquet in his honor.

After some little drinking, the chief guest suddenly began to weep and presently said, "My stepmother, Lady Cai, always cherishes a wish to put me out of the way, and I do not know how to avoid her anger. Could you advise me, Uncle?"

Liu Bei exhorted him to be careful and perfectly filial and nothing could happen. Soon after, the young man took his leave and wept at parting.

Liu Bei escorted Liu Qi well on his way and, pointing to his steed, said, "I owe my life to this horse. Had it not been for him, I would have been already below the Nine Golden Springs."

"It was not the strength of the horse, but your noble fortune, Uncle."

They parted, the young man weeping bitterly.

On reentering the city, Liu Bei met a person in the street wearing a hempen turban, a cotton robe confined by a black girdle, and black shoes. He came along singing a song:

"The universe is rived, O! Now nears the end of all.

The noble mansion quakes, O! What beam can stay
the fall?

A wise one waits his lord, O! But hidden in the glen,

The seeker knows not him, O! Nor me, of common
men."

Liu Bei listened. "Surely this is one of the people Water Mirror spoke of," thought he.

He dismounted, spoke to the singer, and invited him into his residence. Then when they were seated, he asked the stranger's name.

“I am from Yingchuan, and my name is Shan Fu. I have known you by repute for a long time, and they said you appreciated humans of ability. I wanted to come to you, but every way of getting an introduction seemed closed. So I bethought me of attracting your notice by singing that song in the market place.”

Liu Bei thought he had found a treasure and treated the newcomer with the greatest kindness. Then, Shan Fu spoke of the horse that he had seen Liu Bei riding and asked to look at it. So the animal was brought round.

“Is not this a Dilu horse?” said Shan Fu. “But though it is a good steed, it risks his master. You must not ride it.”

“It has already fulfilled the omens,” said Liu Bei, and he related the story of the leap over the Tan Torrent.

“But that was saving his master, not risking him. It will surely harm someone in the end. But I can tell you how to avert the omen.”

“I should be glad to hear it,” said Liu Bei.

“If you have an enemy against whom you bear a grudge, give him this horse and wait till it has fulfilled the evil omens on this person, then you can ride it in safety.”

Liu Bei changed color. “What, Sir! You are but a new acquaintance, and you would advise me to take an evil course and to harm another for my own advantage? No, Sir! I cannot listen.”

His guest smiled, saying, “People said you were virtuous. I could not ask you directly, so I put it that way to test you.”

Liu Bei’s expression changed. He rose and returned the compliment, saying, “But how can I be virtuous while I lack your teaching?”

“When I arrived here, I heard the people saying:

“Since Liu Bei came here, O blessed day!
We’ve had good luck, long may he stay!

“So you see, the effects of your virtue extend to the ordinary people.”

Thereupon, Shan Fu was made Commanding Adviser of the army.

The one idea that held Cao Cao after his return from Jizhou was the capture of Jingzhou. He sent Cao Ren and Li Dian, with the two brothers Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang who had surrendered, to camp at Fancheng with thirty thousand troops and so threaten Jingzhou and Xiangyang. Thence, he sent spies to find out the weak points.

Then, both Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang petitioned Cao Ren, saying, “Liu Bei is strengthening his position at Xinye and laying in large supplies. Some great scheme is afoot, and he should be checked. Since our surrender, we have performed no noteworthy service and, if you will give us five thousand soldiers, we promise to bring you the head of Liu Bei.”

Cao Ren was only too glad, and the expedition set out. The scouts reported this to Liu Bei, who turned to Shan Fu for advice.

Shan Fu said, “They must not be permitted to cross the boundary. Send Guan Yu and Zhang Fei left and right, each with one thousand troops: one to attack the enemy on the march, the other to cut off the retreat. You and Zhao Yun will make a frontal attack.”

Guan Yu and Zhang Fei started, and then Liu Bei went out at the gate with two thousand troops to oppose the enemy. Before they had gone far, they saw a great cloud of dust behind the hills. This marked the approach of the Lu brothers.

Presently, both sides being arrayed, Liu Bei rode out and stood by his standard. He called out, "Who are you who thus would encroach on my territory?"

"I am the great General Lu Kuang, and I have the order of the Prime Minister to make you prisoner!" said the leader.

Liu Bei ordered Zhao Yun to go out, and the two generals engaged. Very soon, Zhao Yun, with a spear thrust, had disposed of his opponent, and Liu Bei gave the signal to attack.

Lu Xiang could not maintain his position and led his troops off. Soon, his force found themselves attacked by an army rushing in from the side led by Guan Yu. The loss was more than a half, and the remainder fled for safety.

About three miles farther on, they found their retreat barred by an army under Zhang Fei, who stood in the way with a long spear ready to thrust, crying out, "Zhang Fei is waiting!"

Zhang Fei bore down upon Lu Xiang, who was slain without a chance of striking a blow. The troops again fled in disorder. They were pursued by Liu Bei, and the greater part killed or captured.

Then, Liu Bei returned into Xinye, where he rewarded Shan Fu and feasted his victorious soldiers.

Some of the defeated troops took the news of the deaths of the leaders and the capture of their comrades to Cao Ren at Fancheng.

Cao Ren, much distressed, consulted Li Dian, who advised, saying, "The loss is due to our underestimation of our enemy. Now, we should stay where we are, hold on, and request reinforcements."

“Not so,” said Cao Ren. “We cannot support calmly the death of two leaders and the loss of so many soldiers. We must avenge them quickly. Xinye is but a crossbow-slug of a place and not worth disturbing the Prime Minister for.”

“Liu Bei is a man of metal,” said Li Dian. “Do not esteem him lightly.”

“What are you afraid of?” said Cao Ren.

“The Rule of War says, ‘To know your enemy and yourself is the secret of victory,’” replied Li Dian. “I am not afraid of the battle, but I do not think we can conquer.”

“You are a traitor!” cried Cao Ren angrily. “Then I will capture Liu Bei myself.”

“Do so. I will guard this city,” said Li Dian.

“If you do not go with me, it is a proof that you are a traitor,” retorted Cao Ren.

At this reproach, Li Dian felt constrained to join the expedition. So they told off twenty-five thousand troops with which they crossed the River Yu for Xinye.

The officers all keenly felt the shame of many slain,
The chief determines on revenge and marches out
again.

What measure of success the expedition met with will be related in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IX

CHAPTER 36

SHAN FU'S STRATEGY: FANKOU IS CAPTURED; XU SHU'S AFFECTION:
ZHUGE LIANG IS RECOMMENDED.

In hot anger, Cao Ren lost no time in marching out to avenge the loss of so much of his army. He hastily crossed the River Yu to attack Xinye and trample it in the dust.

When Shan Fu got back into the city, he said to Liu Bei, "When Cao Ren, now at Fancheng, hears of his losses, he will try to retrieve them and will come to attack us."

"What is the counter-move?" asked Liu Bei.

"As he will come with all his force, his own city will be left undefended. We will surprise it."

"By what ruse?"

The adviser leaned over and whispered to his chief. Whatever the plan was, it pleased Liu Bei, who made arrangements.

Soon, the scouts reported Cao Ren crossing the river with a mighty host.

"Just as I guessed," said Shan Fu, hearing of it.

Then, he suggested that Liu Bei should lead out an army against the invaders. Liu Bei did so, and, when the formation was complete, Zhao Yun rode to the front as champion and challenged the other side.

Li Dian rode out and engaged. At about the tenth bout, Li Dian found he was losing and retired toward his own side. Zhao Yun pressed after him

but was checked by a heavy discharge of arrows from the wings. Then, both sides stopped the battle and retired to their camps.

Li Dian reported to his chief, "Our enemy is brave, very full of spirit, and will be hard to overcome. We had better retreat to Fancheng and wait for reinforcements."

Cao Ren angrily replied, "You damped the army's spirit before we started, and now, you betray us. You have been bought, and you deserve death."

Cao Ren called in the executioners, and they led away their victim. But the other officers came to intercede, and Li Dian was spared. However, he was transferred to the command of the rear, while Cao Ren himself led the attack.

Next day, the drums beat an advance, and Cao Ren, having drawn up his soldiers, sent a messenger over to ask if Liu Bei recognized his plan for the battle array.

So Shan Fu went onto a hill and looked over it. Then, he said to Liu Bei, "The arrangement is called 'The Eight Docked Gates,' and the names of the gates are Birth, Exit, Expanse, Wound, Fear, Annihilation, Obstacle, and Death. If you enter by Birth, Exit, or Expanse, you succeed. If by one of the gates Wound, Fear, or Annihilation, you sustain injuries. The other two gates, Obstacle and Death, will bring the end. Now, though the eight gates are all there quite correctly, the central key-post is lacking, and the whole formation can be thrown into confusion by entry from the southeast and exit due west."

Wherefore, certain orders were issued, and Zhao Yun, leading five hundred troops, rode out on his prancing steed to break the array. He burst in, as directed, at the southeast and, with great clamor and fighting, reached the center. Cao Ren made for the north, but Zhao Yun, instead of following

him, made a dash westward and got through. Then, he turned round to the southeast again and smote till Cao Ren's army was in disarray. Liu Bei gave a general-advance signal, and the victory was complete. The beaten enemy retired.

Shan Fu forbade pursuit, and they returned. The loss of the battle convinced Cao Ren of the wisdom of his colleague Li Dian, and he sent for Li Dian to consult.

"They certainly have some very able person in Liu Bei's army since my formation was so quickly broken," said Cao Ren.

"My chief anxiety is about Fancheng," said Li Dian.

"I will raid their camp this night," said Cao Ren. "If I succeed, we will decide upon what should be done next. If I fail, we will return to Fancheng."

"Their camp will be well-prepared against such a thing, and you will fail," said Li Dian.

"How can you expect to fight successfully when you are so full of doubts?" said Cao Ren, angrily.

He held no more converse with his cautious colleague, but himself took command of the van and set out. Li Dian was relegated to the rear. The attack on the enemy's camp was fixed for the second bell.

Now as Shan Fu was discussing plans with his chief, a whirlwind from the northeast went by, which Shan Fu said, "There will be a raid on the camp tonight."

"How shall we meet it?" said Liu Bei.

“The plans are quite ready,” was the reply.

Shan Fu whispered them to the chief. So at the second bell, when the enemy arrived, they saw fires on all sides, the stockades and huts burning. Cao Ren understood at once that all hope of a surprise was in vain, and he turned to get away as quickly as possible. This was the signal for Zhao Yun to fall on, and that cut Cao Ren’s return road. He hastened north toward the river, and reached the bank, but, while waiting for boats to cross the stream, up came Zhang Fei, attacking.

By dint of great effort and with the support of Li Dian, Cao Ren got into a boat, but most of the soldiers were drowned in the stream. As soon as he got to the farther shore, he bolted for Fancheng. He reached the wall and hailed the gate, but instead of a friendly welcome, he heard the rolling of drums, which was soon followed by the appearance of a body of troops. Guan Yu led them.

“I took the city a long time ago!” shouted Guan Yu.

This was a severe shock to Cao Ren, who turned to flee. As soon as he faced about, Guan Yu attacked and killed many of his force. The remnant hastened to Xuchang. On the road, the beaten general wondered who had advised his opponents with such success, and he asked the natives for the answer.

While the defeated Cao Ren had to find his way back to the capital, Liu Bei had scored a great success. Afterward, he marched to Fancheng, where he was welcomed by Magistrate Liu Mi, himself a scion of the ruling family, who had been born in Changsha. Liu Mi received Liu Bei as a guest in his own house, and gave banquets and treated him exceedingly well.

In the train of the Magistrate, Liu Bei saw a very handsome and distinguished-looking young man, and asked who he was.

Liu Mi replied, "He is my nephew, Kou Feng, son of Lord Kou of Luo. I have taken care of him since his parents died."

Liu Bei took a great liking for the lad and proposed to adopt him. His guardian was willing, and so the adoption was arranged. The young man's name was changed to Liu Feng. When Liu Bei left, he took his adopted son with him. Liu Feng was then made to bow before Guan Yu and Zhang Fei as uncles.

Guan Yu was doubtful of the wisdom of adopting another son, saying, "You have a son. Why do you think it necessary to adopt another? It may cause confusion."

"How? I shall treat him as a father should, and he will serve me as befits a son."

Guan Yu was displeased.

Then, Liu Bei and Shan Fu began further discussions of strategy, and they decided to leave Zhao Yun with one thousand soldiers to guard Fancheng, while they returned to Xinye.

In the meantime, Cao Cao's defeated generals had gone back. When they saw the Prime Minister, Cao Ren threw himself on the ground weeping and acknowledging his faults. He told the tale of his losses.

"The fortune of war," said Cao Cao. "But I should like to know who laid Liu Bei's plans."

"That was Shan Fu," said Cao Ren.

“Who is he?” asked Cao Cao.

Cheng Yu said, “The man is not Shan Fu. When young, this man was fond of fencing and used to take up the quarrels of other people and avenge their wrongs. At the end of Emperor Ling, he killed a man to avenge his friend, and then he let down his hair, muddled his face, and was trying to escape when a lictor caught him and questioned him. He would not reply. So they carted him through the streets, beating a drum and asking if anyone recognized him. Nobody dared own to knowing him, even if they did so. However, his comrades managed to release him secretly, and he ran away under some other name. Then, he turned to study and wandered hither and thither wherever scholars were to be found. He was a regular disputant with Sima Hui.

“His real name is Xu Shu, and he comes from Yingchuan. ‘Shan Fu’ is merely an assumed name.”

“How does he compare with yourself?” asked Cao Cao.

“Ten times cleverer.”

“It is a pity. If able people gather to Liu Bei, his wings will soon grow. What is to be done?”

“Xu Shu is there now. But if you wanted him, it would not be difficult to call him,” replied Cheng Yu.

“How could I make him come?” said Cao Cao.

“He is noted for his affection for his mother. His father died young, leaving his mother a widow with one other son. Now, that son is dead, and his mother, Lady Xun, has no one to care for her. If you sent and got his mother here and told her to write and summon her son, he would surely come.”

Cao Cao sent without loss of time and had the old lady brought to the capital, where he treated her exceedingly well.

Presently, he said, "I hear you have a very talented son, who is now at Xinye helping on that rebel Liu Bei against the government. There he is like a jewel in a muck heap: it is a pity. Supposing you were to call him, I could speak of him before the Emperor, and he might get an important office." Cao Cao bade his secretaries bring along paper and ink, with which Lady Xun could write to her son.

"What sort of a man is Liu Bei?" asked she.

Cao Cao replied, "A common sort of person from Zhuo, irresponsible enough to style himself Imperial Uncle, and so claiming some sort of connection with the Hans. He is neither trustworthy nor virtuous. People say he is a superior man as far as externals go, but a mean man by nature."

Lady Xun answered in a hard voice, "Why do you malign him so bitterly? Everyone knows he is a descendant of one of the Han princes and so related to the House. He has condescended to take a lowly office and is respectful to all people. He has a reputation for benevolence. Everyone—young and old, cowherds and firewood-cutters—knows him by name and knows that he is the finest and noblest man in the world. If my son is in his service, then has he found a fitting master. You, under the name of a Han minister, are really nothing but a Han rebel. Contrary to all truths, you tell me Liu Bei is a rebel, whereby you try to induce me to make my son leave the light for darkness. Are you devoid of all sense of shame?"

As Lady Xun finished speaking, she picked up the inkstone to strike Cao Cao. This so enraged him that he forgot himself and the need for caution and bade the executioners lead off the old woman and put her to death.

Adviser Cheng Yu, however, stopped this act, saying, “This old lady wished to die. But if you kill her, your reputation will be damaged and hers enhanced. Beside that will add a keen desire for revenge to the motives which led Xu Shu to labor in the interest of Liu Bei. You had better keep her here so that Xu Shu’s body and his thoughts may be in different places. He can not devote all his energies to helping our enemy while his mother is here. If you keep her, I think I can persuade the son to come and help you.”

So the outspoken old lady was saved. She was given quarters and cared for. Daily, Cheng Yu went to ask after her health, falsely claiming to being a sworn brother of her son’s and so entitled to serve her and treat her as a filial son would have done. He often sent her gifts and wrote letters to her so that she had to write in reply. And thereby, he learned her handwriting so that he could forge a “home” letter. When he could do this without fear of detection, he wrote one and sent it by the hand of a trusty person to Xinye.

One day, a man arrived inquiring for one Shan Fu. He claimed to have a letter from home for him. The soldiers led the man to Shan Fu. The man said he was an official carrier of letters and had been told to bring this one. Shan Fu quickly tore it open and read:

“On your brother’s death recently, I was left alone: No relative was near, and I was lonely and sad. To my regret, the Prime Minister Cao Cao inveigled me into coming to the capital, and now he says you are a rebel, and he has thrown me into bonds. However, thanks to Cheng Yu, my life has been spared so far, and, if you would only come and submit too, I should be quite safe. When this reaches you,

remember how I have toiled for you and come at once, that you may prove yourself a filial son. We may together find some way of escape to our own place and avoid the dangers that threaten me. My life hangs by a thread, and I look to you to save me. You will not require a second summon.”

Tears gushed from Xu Shu’s eyes as he read, and with the letter in his hand, he went to seek his chief, to whom he told the true story of his life.

“I heard that Liu Biao treated people well and went to him. I happened to arrive at a time of confusion. I saw he was of no use, so I left him very soon. I arrived at the retreat of Sima Hui the Water Mirror late one night and told him, and he blamed me for not knowing a master when I saw one. Then, he told me of you, and I sang that wild song in the streets to attract your attention. You took me; you used me. But now my aged mother is the victim of Cao Cao’s wiles. She is in prison, and he threatens to do worse. She has written to call me, and I must go. I hoped to be able to render you faithful service, but with my dear mother a captive, I should be useless. Therefore, I must leave you and hope in the future to meet you again.”

Liu Bei broke into loud moans when he heard that his adviser was to leave.

“The bond between mother and son is divine,” said Liu Bei, “and I do not need to be reminded where your duty lies. When you have seen your venerable mother, perhaps I may have again the happiness of receiving your instruction.”

Having said farewell, Xu Shu prepared to leave at once. However, at Liu Bei’s wish, he consented to stay over the night.

Then, Sun Qian said privately to his master, “Xu Shu is indeed a genius, but he has been here long enough to know all our secrets. If you let

him go over to Cao Cao, he will be in his confidence, and that will be to our detriment. You ought to keep him at all costs and not let him go. When Cao Cao sees Xu Shu does not come, he will put the mother to death, and that will make Xu Shu the more zealous in your service, for he will burn to avenge his mother's death."

"I cannot do that. It would be very cruel and vile to procure the death of his mother that I might retain the son's services. If I kept him, it would lead to a rupture of the parental lien, and that would be a sin I would rather die than commit."

Both were grieved and sighed.

Liu Bei asked the parting guest to a banquet, but he declined, saying, "With my mother a prisoner, I can swallow nothing, nay, though it were brewed from gold or distilled from jewels."

"Alas! Your departure is as if I lost both my hands," said Liu Bei. "Even the liver of a dragon or the marrow of a phoenix would be bitter in my mouth."

They looked into each other's eyes and wept. They sat silent till dawn. When all was ready for the journey, the two rode out of the city side by side. At Daisy Pavilion, they dismounted to drink the stirrup cup.

Liu Bei lifted the goblet and said, "It is my mean fortune that separates me from you, but I hope that you may serve well your new lord and become famous."

Xu Shu wept as he replied, "I am but a poor ignorant person whom you have kindly employed. Unhappily, I have to break our intercourse in the middle, but my venerable mother is the real cause. Though Cao Cao use all manner of means to coerce me, yet will I never plan for him."

“After you are gone, I shall only bury myself in the hills and hide in the forests,” said Liu Bei.

Xu Shu said, “I had in my heart for you the position of leader of the chieftains, but my plans have been altogether upset by my mother. I have been of no advantage to you, nor should I do any good by remaining. But you ought to seek some person of lofty wisdom to help you in your great enterprise. It is unseemly to be downcast.”

“I shall find none to help better than you, my master.”

“How can I permit such extravagant praise?” said Xu Shu. “I am only a useless blockhead.”

As he moved off, he said to the followers, “Officers, I hope you will render the Princely One good service, whereby to write his name large in the country’s annals and cause his fame to glow in the pages of history. Do not be like me, a person who has left his work half-done.”

They were all deeply affected. Liu Bei could not bring himself to part from his friend. He escorted him a little further, and yet a little further, till Xu Shu said, “I will not trouble you, O Princely One, to come further. Let us say our farewell here.”

Liu Bei dismounted, took Xu Shu by the hands, and said, “Alas! We part. Each goes his way, and who knows if we shall meet again?”

His tears fell like rain, and Xu Shu wept also. But the last goodbyes were said. When the traveler had gone, Liu Bei stood gazing after the little party and watched it slowly disappear. At the last glimpse, he broke into lamentation. “He is gone! What shall I do?” One of the trees shut out the traveler from his sight, and Liu Bei pointed at it, saying, “Wish that I could cut down every tree in the countryside!”

“Why?” said his officers.

“Because they hinder my sight of Xu Shu.”

Suddenly, they saw Xu Shu galloping back.

Said Liu Bei, “He is returning: can it be that he is going to stay?” So he hastened forward to meet Xu Shu, and when they got near enough, he cried, “This return is surely for no slight reason.”

Checking his horse, Xu Shu said, “In the turmoil of my feelings, I forgot to say one word. There is a person of wonderful skill living about seven miles from the city of Xiangyang. Why not seek him?”

“Can I trouble you to ask him to visit me?”

“He will not condescend to visit you. You must go to him. But if he consents, you will be as fortunate as the Zhou when they got the aid of Lu Wang, or the Han when Zhang Liang came to help.”

“How does the unknown compare with yourself?”

“With me? Compared with him, I am as a worn-out carthorse to a palomino, an old duck to a phoenix. This man often compares himself with the ancient sages Guan Zhong and Yue Yi, but in my opinion, he is far their superior. He has the talent to measure the heavens and mete the earth. He is a man who overshadows every other in the world.”

“I would know his name.”

“He belongs to Langye, and his name is Zhuge Liang. He is of the family of the former General Zhuge Feng. His father, Zhuge Gui, was the Deputy Governor of Taishan but died young, and the young fellow went with his uncle Zhuge Xuan to Jingzhou. Imperial Protector Liu Biao was an old friend of his uncle, and Zhuge Liang became settled in Xiangyang. Then his uncle died, and he and his younger brother, Zhuge Jun, returned to their farm in Nanyang and worked as farmers. They used to amuse themselves with the composition of songs in the Liangfu style.

“On their land was a ridge of hills called the Sleeping Dragon, and the elder of the brothers took it as a name and called himself Master Sleeping Dragon. This is your man. He is a veritable genius. You ought really to visit him. And if he will help you, you need feel no more anxiety about peace in the empire.”

“Water Mirror spoke that time of two persons, Sleeping Dragon and Young Phoenix, and said if only one of them could be got to help me, all would be well. Surely he, whom you speak of, is one of them.”

“Young Phoenix is Pang Tong of Xiangyang, and Sleeping Dragon is Zhuge Liang.”

Liu Bei jumped with delight, “Now, at last, I know who the mysterious ones are. How I wish they were here! But for you, I would have still been an unclued man,” said he.



Someone has celebrated in verse this interview where Xu Shu from horseback recommended Zhuge Liang:

Liu Bei heard that his able friend
Must leave him, with saddened heart,
For each to the other had grown very dear,
Both wept when it came to part.
But the parting guest then mentioned a name
That echoed both loud and deep,
Like a thunder clap in a spring-time sky,
And there wakened a dragon from sleep.



Thus was Zhuge Liang recommended to Liu Bei, and Xu Shu rode away.

Now Liu Bei understood the speech of the hermit Water Mirror, and he woke as one from a drunken sleep. At the head of his officers, he retook the road to the city and, having prepared rich gifts, set out with his Brothers for Nanyang.

Under the influence of his emotions at parting, Xu Shu had mentioned the name and betrayed the retreat of his friend. Now, he thought of the possibility that Zhuge Liang would be unwilling to play the part of helper in Liu Bei's scheme, so Xu Shu determined to go to visit him. He therefore took his way to Sleeping Dragon Ridge and dismounted at the cottage.

Asked why he had come, Xu Shu replied, "I wished to serve Liu Bei of Yuzhou, but my mother has been imprisoned by Cao Cao and has sent to call me. Therefore, I have had to leave him. At the moment of parting, I commended you to him. You may expect him speedily, and I hope, Sir, you will not refuse your aid but will consent to use your great talents to help him."

Zhugé Liang showed annoyance and said, "And so you have made me a victim of the world's sacrifice." So saying, he shook out his sleeves and left the room.

The guest shamefacedly retired, mounted his horse, and hastened on his way to the capital to see his mother.

To help the lord he loved right well,

He summoned the aid of another
When he took the distant homeward way
At the call of a loving mother.

What was sequel will appear in the following chapters.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IX

CHAPTER 37

SIMA HUI RECOMMENDS A SCHOLAR TO LIU BEI; LIU BEI PAYS THREE VISITS TO THE SLEEPING DRAGON RIDGE.

As has been said, Xu Shu hastened to the capital. When Cao Cao knew Xu Shu had arrived, he sent two of his confidants, Xun Yu and Cheng Yu, to receive the newcomer at the city gate, and so Xu Shu was led first to the Prime Minister's palace.

"Why did such an illustrious scholar as you bow the knee to Liu Bei?" said Cao Cao.

"I am young, and I fled to avoid the results of certain escapades. I spent some time as a wanderer and so came to Xinye, where I became good friends with him. But my mother is here, and when I thought of all her affection, I could no longer remain absent."

"Now, you will be able to take care of your mother at all times. And I may have the privilege of receiving your instructions."

Xu Shu then took his leave and hastened to his mother's dwelling. Weeping with emotion, he made his obeisance to her at the door of her room.

But she was greatly surprised to see him and said, "What have you come here for?"

"I was at Xinye, in the service of Liu Bei of Yuzhou, when I received your letter. I came immediately."

His mother suddenly grew very angry. Striking the table, she cried, “You shameful and degenerate son! For years, you have been a vagabond in spite of all my teaching. You are a student and know the books. You must then know that loyalty and filial piety are often opposed. Did you not recognize in Cao Cao a traitor, a man who flouts his king and insults the mighty ones? Did you not see that Liu Bei was virtuous and upright as all the world knows? Moreover, he is of the House of Han, and when you were with him, you were serving a fitting master.

“Now, on the strength of a scrap of forged writing, with no attempt at any inquiry, you have left the light and plunged into darkness and earned a disgraceful reputation. Truly, you are stupid. How can I bear to look upon you? You have besmirched the fair fame of your forefathers and are of no use in the world!”

The son remained bowed to the earth, not daring to lift his eyes while his mother delivered this vilifying tirade. As she said the last word, she rose suddenly and left the room. Soon after, one of the servants came out to say Lady Xun had hanged herself. Xu Shu rushed in to try to save her but was too late.



A eulogy of her conduct has been written thus:

Wise Mother Xun, fair is your fame,
The storied page glows with your name,
From duty's path you never strayed,
The family's renown you made.
To train your son no pains you spared,
For your own body nothing cared.

You stand sublime, from us apart,
Through simple purity of heart.
Brave Liu Bei's virtues you extolled,
You blamed Cao Cao, the basely bold.
Of blazing fire you felt no fear,
You blenched not when the sword came near,
But dreaded lest a willful son
Should dim the fame his fathers won.
Yes, Mother Xun was of one mold
With famous heroes of old,
Who never shrank from injury,
And even were content to die.
Fair meed of praise, while still alive,
Was yours, and ever will survive.
Hail! Mother Xun, your memory,
While time rolls on, shall never.



At sight of his mother dead, Xu Shu fell in a swoon and only recovered consciousness after a long time.

By and by, Cao Cao heard of it and sent mourning gifts, and in due course went in person to condole and sacrifice. The body was interred on the south of the capital, and the dead woman's unhappy son kept vigil at her tomb. He steadily rejected all gifts from Cao Cao.

At that time, Cao Cao was contemplating an attack on the south.

His adviser Xun Yu dissuaded him, saying, "The winter is not favorable for this campaign. My lord should await milder weather."

And Cao Cao yielded. But he began to prepare, and led the River Zhang's waters aside to form a lake, which he called the Aquamarine Lake, where he could accustom his soldiers to fight on the water.

As has been said, Liu Bei prepared gifts to offer to Zhuge Liang on his visit. One day, his servants announced a stranger of extraordinary appearance, wearing a lofty headdress and a wide belt.

"Surely, this is he," said Liu Bei, and hastily arranging his dress, he went to welcome the visitor.

But the first glance showed him that it was the recluse of the mountains, Sima Hui. However, Liu Bei was glad to see him and led him into the inner apartment as he would an old friend.

There, Liu Bei conducted him to the seat of honor and made him obeisance, saying, "Since leaving you that day in the mountains, I have been overwhelmed with military preparations and so have failed to visit you as courtesy demanded. Now that the brightness has descended upon me, I hope this dereliction of duty may be pardoned."

"I hear Xu Shu is here. I have come expressly to see him," replied Water Mirror bluntly.

"He has lately left for Xuchang. A messenger came with a letter telling of the imprisonment of his mother."

"Then he has just fallen into Cao Cao's trap, for that letter was a forgery. I have known his mother to be a very noble woman. Even if she were imprisoned by Cao Cao, she would not summon her son like that. Certainly, the letter was a forgery. If the son did not go, the mother would be safe; if he went, she would be a dead woman."

“But how?” asked Liu Bei, dismayed.

“She is a woman of the highest principles, who would be greatly mortified at the sight of her son under such conditions.”

Liu Bei said, “Just as your friend was leaving, he mentioned the name of a certain Zhuge Liang. What think you of him?”

Water Mirror laughed, saying, “If Xu Shu wanted to go, he was free to go. But why did he want to provoke Zhuge Liang into coming out and showing compassion for someone else?”

“Why do you speak like that?” asked Liu Bei

He replied, “Five persons, Zhuge Liang of Nanyang, Cui Zhouping of Boling, Shi Guangyuan of Yingchuan, Meng Gongwei of Runan, and Xu Shu of Yingchuan were the closest of friends. They formed a little coterie devoted to meditation on essential refinement. Only Zhuge Liang arrived at a perception of its meaning. He used to sit among them with his arms about his knees, muttering, and then, pointing to his companions, he would say, ‘You, gentlemen, would become governors and protectors if you were in official life.’

“When they asked him what was his ambition, he would only smile and always compared himself with the great ancient scholars Guan Zhong and Yue Yi. No one could gauge his talents.”

“How comes it that Yingchuan produces so many able humans?” said Liu Bei.

“That old astrologer, Yin Kui, used to say that the stars clustered thick over the region, and so there were many wise people.”

Now Guan Yu was there. When he heard Zhuge Liang so highly praised, he said, “Guan Zhong and Yue Yi are the two most famous leaders mentioned in the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States Periods. They

well overtopped the rest of humankind. Is it not a little too much to say that Zhuge Liang compares with these two?”

“In my opinion he should not be compared with these two, but rather with two others,” said Water Mirror.

“Who are these two?” asked Guan Yu.

“One of them is Lu Wang, who laid the foundations of the Zhou Dynasty so firmly that it lasted eight hundred years, and the other, Zhang Liang, who made the Han glorious for four centuries.”

Before the surprise called forth by this startling statement had subsided, Water Mirror walked down the steps and took his leave. Liu Bei would have kept him if he could, but he was obdurate.

As he stalked proudly away, he threw up his head and said, “Though Sleeping Dragon has found his lord, he has not been born at the right time. It is a pity!”

“What a wise hermit!” was Liu Bei’s comment.

Soon after, the Three Brothers set out to find the abode of the wise man. When they drew near the Sleeping Dragon Ridge, they saw a number of peasants in a field hoeing up the weeds, and as they worked, they sang:

“The earth is a checkered board,
And the sky hangs over all,
Under it humans are contending,
Some rise, but a many fall.
For those who succeed this is well,
But for those who go under rough.
There’s a dozing dragon hard by,
But his sleep is not deep enough.”

Liu Bei and his brothers stopped to listen to the song and, calling up one of the peasants, asked who composed it.

“It was made by Master Sleeping Dragon,” said the laborer.

“Then he lives hereabout. Where?”

“South of this hill, there is a ridge called the Sleeping Dragon, and close by is a sparse wood. In it stands a modest cottage. That is where Master Zhuge Liang takes his repose.”

Liu Bei thanked him, and the party rode on. Soon they came to the ridge, most aptly named, for indeed it lay wrapped in an atmosphere of calm beauty.



A poet wrote of it thus:

Not far from Xiangyang
There stands, clear cut against the sky,
A lofty ridge, and at its foot
A gentle stream goes gliding by.
The contour, curving up and down,
Although by resting cloud it's marred,
Arrests the eye; and here and there
The flank by waterfalls is scarred.
There, like a sleeping dragon coiled,
Or phoenix hid among thick pines,
You see, secure from prying eyes,
A cot, reed-built on rustic lines.
The rough-joined doors, pushed by the wind,

Swing idly open and disclose
The greatest genius of the world
Enjoying still his calm repose.
The air is full of woodland scents,
Around are hedgerows trim and green,
Close-growing intercrossed bamboos
Replace the painted doorway screen.
But look within and books you see
By every couch, near every chair;
And you may guess that common persons
Are very seldom welcomed there.
The hut seems far from human ken,
So far one might expect to find
Wild forest denizens there, trained
To serve in place of humankind.
Without a hoary crane might stand
As warden of the outer gate;
Within a long-armed gibbon come
To offer fruit upon a plate.
But enter; there refinement reigns;
Brocaded silk the lutes protect,
And burnished weapons on the walls
The green of pines outside reflect.
For he who dwells within that hut
Is talented beyond compare,
Although he lives the simple life
And harvest seems his only care.
He waits until the thunderous call

Shall bid him wake, nor sleep again;
Then will he forth and at his word
Peace over all the land shall reign.



Liu Bei soon arrived at the door of the retreat, dismounted, and knocked at the rough door of the cottage. A youth appeared and asked what he wanted.

Liu Bei replied, "I am Liu Bei, General of the Han Dynasty, Lord of Yicheng, Imperial Protector of Yuzhou, and Uncle of the Emperor. I am come to salute the Master."

"I cannot remember so many titles," said the lad.

"Then simply say that Liu Bei has come to inquire after him."

"The Master left this morning early."

"Whither has he gone?"

"His movements are very uncertain. I do not know whither he has gone."

"When will he return?"

"That, also, is uncertain. Perhaps in three days, perhaps in ten."

The disappointment was keen.

"Let us go back, since we cannot see him," said Zhang Fei.

"Wait a little time," said Liu Bei.

"It would be better to return," said Guan Yu, "then we might send to find out when this man will have come back."

So Liu Bei agreed, first saying to the boy, "When the Master returns, tell him that Liu Bei has been here."

They rode away for some miles. Presently, Liu Bei stopped and looked back at the surroundings of the little cottage in the wood.

The mountains were picturesque rather than grand, the water clear rather than profound, the plain was level rather than extensive, the woods luxuriant rather than thick. Gibbons ranged through the trees, and cranes waded in the shallow water. The pines and the bamboos vied with each other in verdure. It was a scene to linger upon.

While Liu Bei stood regarding it, he saw a figure coming down a mountain path. The man's bearing was lofty. He was handsome and dignified. He wore a comfortable-looking bonnet on his head, and a black robe hung about his figure in easy folds. He used a staff to help him down the steep path.

"Surely that is he!" said Liu Bei. He dismounted and walked over to greet the stranger, whom he saluted deferentially, saying, "Are you not Master Sleeping Dragon, Sir?"

"Who are you, General?" said the stranger.

"I am Liu Bei."

"I am not Zhuge Liang, but I am a friend of his. My name is Cui Zhouping."

"Long have I known of you! I am very glad to see you," replied Liu Bei. "And now I pray you be seated just where we are, and let me receive your instruction."

The two men sat down in the wood on a stone, and the two Brothers ranged themselves by Liu Bei's side.

Cui Zhouping began, saying, "General, for what reason do you wish to see Zhuge Liang?"

Liu Bei replied, “The empire is in confusion, and troubles gather everywhere. I want your friend to tell me how to restore order.”

“You, Sir, wish to arrest the present disorder, although you are a kindly man and, from the oldest antiquity, the correction of disorder has demanded stern measures. On the day that Liu Bang first put his hand to the work and slew the wicked ruler of Qin, order began to replace disorder. Good government began with the Supreme Ancestor (BC 206), and endured two hundred years—two centuries of tranquility. Then came Wang Mang’s rebellion, and disorder took the place of order. Anon, arose Liu Xiu, who restored the Han Dynasty, and order once more prevailed. We have had two centuries of order and tranquility, and the time of trouble and battles is due. The restoration of peace will take time. It cannot be quickly accomplished. You, Sir, wish to get Zhuge Liang to regulate times and seasons, to repair the cosmos, but I fear the task is indeed difficult, and to attempt it would be a vain expenditure of mental energy. You know well that he who goes with the favor of Heaven travels an easy road; he who goes contrary meets difficulties. One cannot escape one’s lot; one cannot evade fate.”

“Master,” replied Liu Bei, “your insight is indeed deep, and your words of wide meaning. But I am a scion of the House of Han and must help it. Dare I talk of the inevitable and trust to fate?”

Cui Zhouping replied, “A simple denizen of the mountain wilds is unfitted to discuss the affairs of empire. But you bade me speak and I have spoken—perhaps somewhat madly.”

“Master, I am grateful for your instruction. But do know you whither Zhuge Liang has gone?”

“I also came to see him, and I know not where he is,” said Cui Zhouping.

“If I asked you, Master, to accompany me to my poor bit of territory, would you come?”

“I am too dilatory, too fond of leisure and ease, and no longer have any ambitions. But I will see you another time.”

And with these words Cui Zhouping saluted and left. The Three Brothers also mounted and started homeward.

Presently, Zhang Fei said, “We have not found Zhuge Liang, and we have had to listen to the wild ravings of this so-called scholar. There is the whole result of this journey.”

“His words were those of a deep thinker,” replied Liu Bei.

Some days after the return to Xinye, Liu Bei sent to find out whether Zhuge Liang had returned, and the messenger came back saying that he had. Wherefore, Liu Bei prepared for another visit.

Again, Zhang Fei showed his irritation by remarking, “Why must you go hunting after this villager? Send and tell him to come.”

“Silence!” said Liu Bei, “The Teacher Mencius said, ‘To try to see the sage without going his way is like barring a door you wish to enter.’ Zhuge Liang is the greatest sage of the day. How can I summon him?”

So Liu Bei rode away to make his visit, his two Brothers with him as before. It was winter and exceedingly cold. Floating clouds covered the whole sky. Before they had gone far, a bitter wind began to blow in their faces, and the snow began to fly. Soon, the mountains were of jade and the trees of silver.

“It is very cold and the earth is frozen hard; no fighting is possible now,” said Zhang Fei. “Yet we are going all this way to get advice which will be useless to us. Where is the sense of it? Let us rather get back to Xinye, out of the cold.”

Liu Bei replied, “I am set upon proving my zeal to Zhuge Liang. But if you, my Brother, do not like the cold, you can return.”

“I do not fear death; do you think I care for the cold? But I do care about wasting my Brother’s energies,” said Zhang Fei.

“Say no more,” said Liu Bei, and they traveled on.

When they drew near the little wood, they heard singing within a roadside inn and stopped to listen. This was the song:

Although possessed of talent rare,
This man has made no name;
Alas! The day is breaking late
That is to show his fame.
O friends you know the Lu Wang’s tale:
The aged man constrained to leave
His cottage by the sea,
To follow in a prince’s train
His counselor to be.
Eight hundred feudal chieftains met
Who came with one accord;
The happy omen, that white fish,
That leapt the boat aboard;
The gory field in distant wilds.
Whence flowed a crimson tide,
And him acknowledged chief in war

Whose virtues none denied;
That Zhang Liang, a Gaoyang rustic,
Fond of wine, who left, his native place
And went to serve so faithfully
The man of handsome face;
And one who spoke of ruling chiefs
In tones so bold and free,
But sitting at the festive board
Was full of courtesy;
And one, that was he who laid in dust
Walled cities near four score
But humans of doughty deeds like these
On earth are seen no more.
Now had these humans not found their lord
Would they be known to fame?
Yet having found, they served him well
And so achieved a name.

The song ended, the singer's companion tapping the table sang:

We had a famous founder,
Who drew his shining sword,
Cleansed all the land within the seas
And made himself its lord.
In time his son succeeded him,
And so from son to son
The lordship passed, held firm until
Four hundred years had run.
Then dawned a day of weaklier sons,

The fiery virtue failed,
Then ministers betrayed their trust,
Court intrigues vile prevailed.
The omens came; a serpent
Coiled on the dragon throne,
While in the hall of audience
Unholy halos shone.
Now bandits swarm in all the land
And noble strives with chief,
The common people, sore perplexed,
Can nowhere find relief.
Let's drown our sorrows in the cup,
Be happy while we may,
Let those who wish run after fame
That is to last for aye.

The two men laughed loudly and clapped their hands as the second singer ceased. Liu Bei thought full surely the longed-for sage was there, so he dismounted and entered the inn. He saw the two merrymakers sitting opposite each other at a table. One was pale with a long beard; the other had a strikingly refined face.

Liu Bei saluted them and said, "Which of you is Master Sleeping Dragon?"

"Who are you, Sir?" asked the long-bearded one. "What business have you with Sleeping Dragon?"

"I am Liu Bei. I want to inquire of him on how to restore tranquility to the world."

“Well, neither of us is your man, but we are friends of his. My name is Shi Guangyuan, and my friend here is Meng Gongwei.”

“I know you both by reputation,” said Liu Bei gladly. “I am indeed fortunate to meet you in this haphazard way. Will you not come to Sleeping Dragon’s retreat and talk for a time? I have horses here for you.”

“We idle folks of the wilds know nothing of tranquilizing states. Please do not trouble to ask. Pray mount again and continue searching out Sleeping Dragon.”

So he remounted and went his way. He reached the little cottage, dismounted, and tapped at the door. The same lad answered his knock, and he asked whether the Master had returned.

“He is in his room, reading,” said the boy.

Joyful indeed was Liu Bei as he followed the lad in. In front of the middle door, he saw written this pair of scrolls:

By purity inspire the inclination;
By repose affect the distant.

As Liu Bei was looking at this couplet, he heard someone singing in a subdued voice and stopped by the door to peep in. He saw a young man close to a charcoal brazier, hugging his knees while he sang:

“The phoenix dies high, O!
And only will perch on a magnolia tree.
The scholar is hidden, O!
Till his lord appear he can patient be.
He tills his fields, O!
He is well-content and loves his home,
He awaits his day, O!

His books and his lute to leave and roam.”

As the song ended, Liu Bei advanced and saluted, saying, “Master, long have I yearned for you, but have found it impossible to salute you. Lately, Water Mirror spoke of you, and I hastened to your dwelling, only to come away disappointed. This time, I have braved the elements and come again, and my reward is here. I see your face, and I am indeed fortunate.”

The young man hastily returned the salute and said, “General, you must be that Liu Bei of Yuzhou who wishes to see my brother.”

“Then, Master, you are not Sleeping Dragon!” said Liu Bei, starting back.

“I am his younger brother, Zhuge Jun. He has another, elder brother, Zhuge Jin, now with Sun Quan in the South Land as a counselor. Zhuge Liang is the second of our family.”

“Is your brother at home?”

“Only yesterday, he arranged to go a jaunt with Cui Zhouping.”

“Whither have they gone?”

“Who can say? They may take a boat and sail away among the lakes, or go to gossip with the priests in some remote mountain temple, or wander off to visit a friend in some faraway village, or be sitting in some cave with a lute or a chessboard. Their goings and comings are uncertain, and nobody can guess at them.”

“What very poor luck have I! Twice have I failed to meet the great sage.”

“Pray sit a few moments, and let me offer you some tea.”

“Brother, since the Master is not here, I pray you remount and go,” said Zhang Fei.

“Since I am here, why not a little talk before we go home again?” said Liu Bei. Then, turning to his host, he continued, “Can you tell me if your worthy brother is skilled in strategy and studies works on war?”

“I do not know.”

Grumbled Zhang Fei, “The wind and snow are getting worse. We ought to go back.”

Liu Bei turned on him angrily and told him to stop.

Zhuge Jun said, “Since my brother is absent, I will not presume to detain you longer. I will return your call soon.”

“Please do not take that trouble. In a few days, I will come again. But if I could borrow paper and ink, I would leave a note to show your worthy brother that I am zealous and earnest.”

Zhuge Jun produced the “four treasures” of the scholar, and Liu Bei, thawing out the frozen brush between his lips, spread the sheet of delicate notepaper and wrote:

“Liu Bei has long admired your fame. He has visited your dwelling twice, but to his great regret he has gone empty away. He humbly remembers that he is a distant relative of the Emperor, that he has undeservedly enjoyed fame and rank. When he sees the proper government wrested aside and replaced by pretense, the foundation of the state crumbling away, hordes of braves creating confusion in the country, and an evil cabal behaving unseemly toward the rightful Prince, then his heart and gall are torn to shreds. Though he has a real desire to assist, he is yet deficient in the needful skill. Wherefore, he turns to the Master, trusting in his kindness, graciousness, loyalty, and righteousness. Would the Master but use his talent, equal to that of Lu

Wang, and perform great deeds like Zhang Liang, then would the empire be happy and the Throne would be secure.

“This is written to tell you that, after purification of mind with fasting and of body with fragrant baths, Liu Bei will come again to prostrate himself in your honored presence and receive enlightenment”

The letter written and given to Zhuge Jun, Liu Bei took his leave, exceedingly disappointed at this second failure.

As he was mounting, he saw the serving lad waving his hand outside the hedge and heard him call out, “The old Master is coming!”

Liu Bei looked and then saw a figure seated on a donkey leisurely jogging along over a bridge.

The rider of the donkey wore a cap with long flaps down to his shoulders, and his body was wrapped in a fox-fur robe. A youth followed him bearing a jar of wine. As he came through the snow, he hummed a song:

“This is eve, the sky is overcast,
The north wind comes with icy blast,
Light snowflakes whirl down until
A white pall covers dale and hill.
Perhaps above the topmost sky
White dragons strive for mastery,
The armor scales from their forms riven
Are scattered over the world wind-driven.
Amid the storm there jogs along
A simple wight who croons a song.
‘O poor plum trees, the gale doth tear

Your blossoms off and leave you bare.”

Here at last is Sleeping Dragon, thought Liu Bei, hastily slipping out of the saddle.

He saluted the donkey-rider as he neared and said, “Master, it is hard to make way against this cold wind. I and my companions have been waiting long.”

The rider got off his donkey and returned the bow, while Zhuge Jun, from behind, said, “This is not my brother. It is his father-in-law Huang Chenyan.”

Liu Bei said, “I chanced to hear the song you were singing. It is very beautiful.”

Huang Chenyan replied, “It is a little poem I read in my son-in-law’s house, and I recalled it as I crossed the bridge and saw the plum trees in the hedge. And so it happened to catch your ear, Noble Sir.”

“Have you seen your son-in-law lately?” asked Liu Bei.

“That is just what I have come to do now.”

At this, Liu Bei bade him farewell and went on his way. The storm was very grievous to bear, but worse than the storm was the grief in his heart as he looked back at Sleeping Dragon Ridge.



One winter’s day through snow and wind
A prince rode forth the sage to find;
Alas! His journey was in vain,
And sadly turned he home again.
The stream stood still beneath the bridge

A sheet of ice draped rock and ridge,
His steed benumbed with biting cold
But crawled as he were stiff and old.
The snowflakes on the rider's head
Were like pear-blossoms newly shed,
Or like the willow-catkins light
They brushed his cheek in headlong flight.
He stayed his steed, he looked around,
The snow lay thick on tree and mound,
The Sleeping Dragon Ridge lay white
A hill of silver, glistening bright.

After the return to Xinye, the time slipped away till spring was near. Then, Liu Bei cast lots to find the propitious day for another journey in search of Zhuge Liang. The day being selected, he fasted for three days and then changed his dress ready for the visit.

His two Brothers viewed the preparations with disapproval and presently made up their minds to remonstrate.

The sage and the fighting generals never agree,
A warrior despises humility.

The next chapter will tell what they said.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IX

CHAPTER 38

ZHUGE LIANG PLANS FOR THE THREE KINGDOMS; SUN QUAN ATTACKS XIAKOU TO TAKE REVENGE.

Nothing discouraged by two unsuccessful visits to the retreat of the sage whose advice he sought to secure, Liu Bei made preparations for a third visit.

His brothers disapproved, and Guan Yu said, "Brother, you have sought him twice. Surely this is showing even too much deference. I do not believe in this fame of his for learning. He is avoiding you and dare not submit to the test. Why so obstinately hold this idea?"

"You are wrong, my Brother. In the Spring and Autumn Period, Prince Huan of Qi paid five visits to the Eastern Suburb before he got to see Guan Zhong. And my desire to see Zhuge Liang is even greater than his."

"I think you are mistaken," said Zhang Fei. "How can this villager be such a marvel of wisdom? You should not go again, and if he will not come, I will bring him with a hempen rope."

"Have you forgotten the great King Wen's visit to Lu Wang, the old man of the River Wei? If King Wen could show such deference to a wise man, where am I too deferential? If you will not go, your Brother and I will go without you," said Liu Bei.

"If you two go, how can I hang back?" said Zhang Fei.

"If you go, then you must be polite."

Zhang Fei said he would not forget himself, and the Three set out. When they were a quarter of a mile from the little cottage, Liu Bei dismounted, deciding to show his respect by approaching the house on foot. Very soon he met Zhuge Jun, whom he saluted with great deference, inquiring whether his brother was at home.

“He returned last evening. You can see him today, General.” As Zhuge Jun said this, he went off with some swagger.

“Fortune favors me this time,” said Liu Bei. “I am going to see the Master.”

“That was a rude fellow,” said Zhang Fei. “It would not have hurt him to have conducted us to the house. Why did he go off like that?”

“Each has his own affairs,” said Liu Bei. “What power have we over him?”

Soon, the Three stood at the door, and they knocked. The serving-lad came out and asked their business.

Liu Bei said very deferentially, “I would trouble the servant of the genius, gentle page, to inform the Master that Liu Bei wishes to pay his respects to him.”

“My master is at home, but he is asleep.”

“In that case, do not announce me.” Liu Bei bade his two Brothers wait at the door quietly, and he himself entered with careful steps. There was the man he sought, lying asleep on the couch, stretched on a simple mat. Liu Bei saluted him with joined hands at a respectful distance.

The time passed, and still, the sleeper did not wake. The two Brothers left without, beginning to feel impatient, also came in, and Zhang Fei was annoyed at seeing his revered elder Brother respectfully standing by while another slept.

“What an arrogant fellow is this Master!” said he. “There is our Brother, waiting, while he sleeps on perfectly carelessly. I will go to the back of the place and let off a bomb and see if that will rouse him.”

“No, no! You must do nothing of the kind,” whispered Guan Yu, and then Liu Bei told them to go out again.

Just then, Liu Bei noticed that the Master moved. He turned over as though about to rise, but instead, he faced the wall and again fell asleep. The serving-lad made as if he would rouse his master, but Liu Bei forbade him to be disturbed, and Liu Bei waited yet another weary hour.

Then, Zhuge Liang woke up repeating to himself the lines:

“Can any know what fate is his?
Yet have I felt throughout my life,
The day would come at last to quit
The calm retreat for toil and strife.”

As he finished, he turned to the lad, saying, “Have any of the usual people come?”

“Liu Bei, the Uncle of the Emperor is here,” said the boy. “He has been waiting a long time.”

“Why did you not tell me?” said he, rising from the couch. “I must dress.”

Zhuce Liang rose and turned into a room behind to dress. In a short time, he reappeared, his clothing properly arranged, to receive his visitor.

Then, Liu Bei saw coming toward him a young man of medium height with a refined face. He wore a head-wrap and a long, crane-white gown. He moved with so much dignity as though he was rather more than mortal.

Liu Bei bowed, saying, "I am one of the offshoots of the Han family, a simple person from Zhuo. I have long known the Master's fame, which has indeed thundered in my ear. Twice I have come to visit you, without success. Once, I left my name on your writing table. You may have my note."

Zhuge Liang replied, "This hermit is but a dilatory person by temperament. I know I have to thank you for more than one vain visit, and I am ashamed to think of them."

These courteous remarks and the proper bows exchanged, the two men sat in their relative positions as host and guest, and the serving-lad brought tea.

Then Zhuge Liang said, "From your letter, I know that you grieve for both people and government. If I were not so young and if I possessed any talent, I would venture to question you."

Liu Bei replied, "Sima Hui and Xu Shu have both spoken of you. Can it be that their words were vain? I trust, O Master, that you will not despise my worthlessness but will condescend to instruct me."

"The two men you speak of are very profound scholars. I am but a peasant, a mere farmer, and who am I that I should talk of imperial politics? Those two misled you when they spoke of me. Why do you reject the beautiful jewel for a worthless pebble?"

"But your abilities are world-embracing and marvelous. How can you be content to allow time to pass while you idle away life in these secluded haunts? I conjure you, O Master, to remember the inhabitants of the empire and remove my crass ignorance by bestowing instruction upon me."

"But what is your ambition, General?"

Liu Bei moved his seat nearer to his host and said, "The Hans are sinking: designing ministers steal away their authority. I am weak, yet I desire to restore the state to its right mind. But my ignorance is too vast, my means are too slender, and I know not where to turn. Only you, Master, can lighten my darkness and preserve me from falling. How happy should I be if you would do so!"

Zhuge Liang replied, "One bold person after another has arisen in various parts of the empire ever since the days of the rebel Dong Zhuo. Cao Cao was not so powerful as Yuan Shao, but he overcame Yuan Shao by seizing the favorable moment and using his soldiers properly. Now, he is all-powerful: he rules an immense army and, through his control of the court, the various feudal lords as well. You cannot think of opposing him.

"Then the Suns have held their territory in the South Land for three generations. Their position in that old state of Wu may not appear too secure, but they have popularity to appeal to. You can gain support but win no success there.

"The Region of Jingzhou rests on the two Rivers Han and Mian to the north, and their interests lie in all to the south of these rivers. On the east they touch Wu, and on the west they extend to the ancient states of Ba and Shu. This is the area in which decisive battles have to be won, and one must hold it in order to be secure, and Heaven has virtually made it yours.

"The Region of Yizhou in the west is an important place, fertile and extensive, a country favored of Heaven and that through which the Founder of Han obtained the empire. Its ruler, Liu Zhang, is ignorant and weak. The people are noble and the country prosperous, but he does not know how to hold it all, and all the able people of the region are yearning for an enlightened prince.

“As you are a scion of the Family, well-known throughout the land as trusty and righteous, a wholehearted hero, who greatly desires to win the support of the wise, if you get possession of Yizhou and Jingzhou, if on the west you are in harmony with the Rong Tribes, on the south win over the ancient states of Yi and Viet, make an alliance with Sun Quan of Wu, and maintain good government, you can await confidently the day when Heaven shall offer you the desired opportunity. Then, you may depute a worthy leader to go to the northeast while you take command of an expedition to the northwest, and will you not find the warmest welcome prepared for you by the people? This done, the completion of the task will be easy. The Hans will be restored. And these are my counsels in all these operations, if you will only undertake them.”

Zhuge Liang paused while he bade the lad bring out a map. As this was unrolled, Zhuge Liang went on, “There you see the fifty-four counties of the west. Should you wish to take the overlordship, you will yield the Heaven’s favor to Cao Cao in the north, and you will relinquish the Earth’s advantage to Sun Quan in the south. You, General, will hold the Humans’ heart and complete the trinity. Jingzhou is to be taken first as a home, the River Lands next for the foundation of domination. When you are firmly established, you can lay your plans for the attainment of the whole empire.”

As Zhuge Liang ceased his harangue, Liu Bei left his place and saluted him, saying, “Your words, O Master, render everything so clear that the clouds are swept aside and I see the clear sky. But Jingzhou belongs to Liu Biao, my kinsman, and Yizhou to another kinsman, Liu Zhang. I could hardly take the lands from them.”

“I have studied the stars, and I know Liu Biao is not long for this world. Further, Liu Zhang is not the sort of man to endure. Both places will certainly fall to you.”

Liu Bei bowed his acknowledgments. And so, in one conversation, Zhuge Liang proved that he, who had lived in complete retirement all his life, knew and foresaw the tripod division into which the empire was to break. True, indeed, is it that throughout all the ages no one has ever equaled his intelligence and mastery of the situation.



Behold, when Liu Bei frets that he is weak,
Then Sleeping Dragon is not far to seek;
When he desires to know how things will hap,
The Master, smiling, shows him on the map.



“Though I be of small repute and scanty virtue,” said Liu Bei, “I hope, O Master, you will not despise me for my worthlessness, but will leave this retreat to help me. I will assuredly listen most reverently to your words.”

Zhuce Liang replied, “I have long been happy on my farm and am fond of my leisure. I fear I cannot obey your command.”

Liu Bei wept. “If you will not, O Master, what will become of the people?”

The tears rolled down unchecked upon the lapel and sleeves of Liu Bei’s robe. This proved to Zhuge Liang the sincerity of his desire.

Hence, Zhuge Liang said, “General, if you will accept me, I will render what trifling service I can.”

Liu Bei was greatly delighted. He called in Guan Yu and Zhang Fei to make their bows and brought out the gifts he had prepared. Zhuge Liang

refused all the gifts.

“These are not gifts to engage your services, but mere proof of my regard,” said Liu Bei.

Then, the presents were accepted. They all remained that night at the farm. Next day, Zhuge Jun returned, and his brother said to him, “Uncle Liu Bei has come thrice to see me, and now I must go with him. Keep up the farm in my absence and do not let the place go to ruin. As soon as my work is accomplished, I will certainly return.”



Then, turning from his humble home,
He thought of peaceful days to come,
When he should take the homeward way
And never beyond the valley stray.
But duty kept him in the west,
And there he found his place of rest.

An old poem may be quoted here:

The Founder of Han seized his gleaming blade
And at Mangdang Hills, the blood of the white snake
flowed.

He conquered Qin, destroyed Chu, and entered
Xianyang.

After two centuries of rule, the line was near broken,
But Liu Xiu restored the glory at Capital Luoyang.
And his children occupied the throne
Till decay began in the days of Huan and Ling.

The Emperor Xian removed the capital to Xuchang,
And within the four seas, all was confusion.
Bold spirits started up in fierce contention.
Cao Cao, seized the favorable moment
And the imperial authority passed into his hands.
While the Suns made to themselves
A glorious heritage at the Great River,
Solitary and poor, Liu Bei wandered from place to
place,
Till he found a haven in Xinye.
Sorely distressed he was at the sorrows of the people,
But Sleeping Dragon conceived a noble ambition,
Within his breast were thoughts
Of great things to be accomplished by force of arms.
Then, because of the parting words of Xu Shu,
And by the thrice repeated visits to his retreat,
The great hero found and knew his mentor.
When the age of Zhuge Liang was but thrice nine
years,
He turned from his books, put aside his lute,
And left the peaceful fields he had loved,
Under his guidance Jingzhou was taken
And the two Lands of the Rivers conquered.
He unrolled great schemes, as one all knowing,
In speech, he went to and fro in the world,
The sound of war drums rolled from his tongue,
The words from his heart stirred one to the utmost
depths.

The dragon pranced, the tiger glared,
And peace was brought to the world.
Through all the ages his fame shall never decay.



After taking leave of Zhuge Jun, Liu Bei and his followers left for Xinye, with Zhuge Liang as companion. When they took up their abode there, Zhuge Liang was treated as a mentor, eating at the same table, sleeping on the same couch as Liu Bei. They spent whole days conversing over the affairs of the empire.

Zhuce Liang said, "Cao Cao is training his troops for naval service in Aquamarine Lake, and hence certainly intends to invade the country south of the Great River. We ought to send our spies to ascertain what Cao Cao and Sun Quan are really doing."

So spies were dispatched.

Now after Sun Quan succeeded to the heritage of his father and brother, he sent far and wide to invite people of ability to aid him. He established lodging places for them in Kuaiji in Wu, and directed Gu Yong and Zhang Hong to welcome and entertain all those who came. And year by year, they flocked in, one recommending another. Among them were Kan Ze of Kuaiji, Yan Jun of Pengcheng, Xue Zong of Beishan, Cheng Bing of Runan, Zhu Huan of Wujun, Lu Ji of the same place, Zhang Wen of Wucheng, Luo Tong of Kuaiji, and Wu Can of Wushang. All these scholars were treated with great deference.

Many able leaders came also. Among them were Lu Meng of Runan, Lu Xun of Wujun, Xu Sheng of Langye, Pan Zhang of Dongjun, and Ding Feng of Lujiang. Thus, Sun Quan obtained the assistance of many people of ability both in peace and war and all went well with him.

In the seventh year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 202), Cao Cao had broken the power of Yuan Shao. Then he sent a messenger to the South Land ordering Sun Quan to send his son to court to serve in the retinue of the Emperor. Sun Quan, however, hesitated to comply with this request, and the matter was the subject of much discussion. His mother, Lady Wu, sent for Zhou Yu and Zhang Zhao and asked their advice.

Zhang Zhao said, "Cao Cao wishes a son to be present at court as a hostage whereby he has a hold upon us, as formerly was the case with all the feudal chiefs. If we do not comply with this request, he will doubtless attack the region. There is some peril."

Zhou Yu said, "Our lord has succeeded to the heritage and has a large army of veterans and ample supplies. He has able officers ready to do his bidding. So why should he be compelled to send a hostage to any person? To send a hostage is to be forced into joining Cao Cao and carrying out his behests, whatever they be. Then we shall be in his power. It would be better not to send but rather to await patiently the course of events and prepare plans to attack."

"That is also my opinion," said the Dowager.

So Sun Quan dismissed the messenger but did not send his son. Cao Cao resented this and had since nourished schemes against the South Land. But their realization had been delayed by the dangers on the north and, so far, no attack had been made.

Late in the eighth year (AD 203), Sun Quan led his armies against Huang Zu and fought on the Great River, where he was successful in several battles. One of Sun Quan's leaders, Ling Cao, led a fleet of light vessels up the river and broke into Xiakou but was killed by an arrow of Gan Ning, a general of Huang Zu. Ling Cao left a son, Ling Tong, fifteen years of age, who led another expedition to recover his father's corpse and was so far successful. After that, as the war was inclined to go against him, Sun Quan returned again to his own country.

Now Sun Quan's younger brother, Sun Yi, was Governor of Dangyang. He was a hard man and given to drink and, in his cups, very harsh to his people, ordering the infliction of severe floggings. Two of his officers, Military Inspector Gui Lan and Secretary Dai Yuan, bore their chief a grudge and sought to assassinate him. They took into their confidence one Bian Hong, of the escort, and the three plotted to kill their master at a great assembly of officials at Dangyang amid the banquets.

Sun Yi's wife, Lady Xu, was skilled in divination, and on the day of the great banquet, she cast a most inauspicious lot. Wherefore, she besought her husband to stay away from the assembly. But he was obstinate and went. The faithless guardsman followed his master in the dusk when the gathering dispersed, and stabbed him with a dagger.

The two prime movers at once seized Bian Hong and beheaded him in the market place. Then they went to Sun Yi's residence, which they plundered.

Gui Lan was taken with the beauty of the dead Governor's wife and told her, "I have avenged the death of your husband, and you must go with me."

Lady Xu pleaded, saying, "It is too soon after my husband's death to think of remarriage. But as soon as the thirty-day mourning sacrifices are

over, I will be yours.”

She thus obtained a respite, which she utilized to send for two old generals of her husband, Sun Gao and Fu Ying. They came, and she tearfully told her tale.

“My husband had great faith in you. Now Gui Lan and Dai Yuan have compassed his death and have laid the crime on Bian Hong. They have plundered my house and carried off my servants. Worse than this, Gui Lan insists that I shall be his wife. To gain time, I have pretended to favor this proposal, and I pray you now send the news to my husband’s brother and beg him to slay these two miscreants and avenge this wrong. I will never forget your kindness in this life or the next.”

And she bowed before them.

They wept also and said, “We were much attached to our master, and now that he has come to an untimely end, we must avenge him. Dare we not carry out your behests?”

So they sent a trusty messenger to Sun Quan.

On the day of the sacrifices, Lady Xu called in her two friends and hid them in a secret chamber. Then, the ceremonies were performed in the great hall. These over, she took off her mourning garb, bathed and perfumed herself, and assumed an expression of joy. She laughed and talked as usual, so that Gui Lan rejoiced in his heart, thinking of the pleasure that was to be his.

When night came, she sent a servant girl to call her suitor to the palace, where she entertained him at supper. When he had well drunk, she suggested that they should retire and led him to the chamber where her friends were waiting. He followed without the least hesitation.

As soon as she entered the room, she called out, “Where are you, Generals?”

Out rushed Sun Gao and Fu Ying, and the drunken Gui Lan, incapable of any resistance, was dispatched with daggers.

Next, Lady Xu invited Dai Yuan to a supper, and he was slain in similar fashion. After that, she sent to the houses of her enemies and slew all therein. This done, she resumed her mourning garb, and the heads of the two men were hung as a sacrifice before the coffin of her husband.

Very soon, her brother-in-law came with an army, and hearing the story of the deeds of the two generals from the widow, gave them the ranks of Commandership and put them over Dangyang. When Sun Quan left, he took the widow to his own home so that she would be cared for. All those who heard of her brave conduct were loud in praise of her virtue:

Full of resource and virtuous, few in the world are like
her,

Guilefully wrought she and compassed the death of
the lusty assassins,

Faithful servants are always ready to deal with
rebellion,

None can ever excel that heroine famous in Wu.

The brigandage that had troubled the South Land had all been suppressed, and a large fleet of seven thousand battleships was in the Great River ready for service. Sun Quan appointed Zhou Yu to be the Supreme Admiral and Commander-in-Chief over all military forces.

In the twelfth year (AD 207), the Dowager Wu, feeling her end approaching, called to her the two advisers Zhou Yu and Zhang Zhao and spoke thus: "I came of a family of the old Wu but lost my parents in early life. My brother Wu Jing and I went into the old Yue, and then I married into this family. I bore my husband four sons, not without premonitions of the greatness to be theirs. With my first, Sun Ce, I dreamed of the moon and with my second, Sun Quan, of the sun, which omens were interpreted by the soothsayer as signs of their great honor. Unhappy Sun Ce died young, but Sun Quan inherited, and it is he whom I pray you both assist with one accord. Then may I die in peace."

And to her son, she said, "These two you are to serve as they were your teachers and treat them with all respect. My younger sister and I both were wives to your father, and so she is also a mother to you, and you are to serve her after I am gone as you now serve me. And you must treat your sister with affection and find a handsome husband for her."

Then, she died, and her son mourned for her that year.

The following year, they began to discuss an attack upon Huang Zu.

Zhang Zhao said, "The armies should not move during the period of mourning."

However, Zhou Yu, more to the point, said, "Vengeance should not be postponed on that account. It could not wait upon times and seasons."

Still, Sun Quan halted between two opinions and would not decide.

Then came Commander Lu Meng, who said to his master, "While I was at Dragon Gorge, one leader of Huang Zu, Gan Ning from Lingjiang, offered to surrender. I found out all about him. He is something of a scholar, is forceful and fond of wandering about as a fighter-errant. He assembled a band of outlaws with whom he roamed over the rivers and lakes, where he

would terrorize everybody. He wore a bell at his waist, and at the sound of this bell, everyone fled and hid. He fitted his boats with sails of Xichuan brocade, and people called him the ‘Pirate with Silken Sails.’

“Then he reformed. He and his band went to Liu Biao, but they left him when they saw he would never accomplish anything, and now they would serve under your banner, only that Huang Zu detains them at Xiakou. Formerly, when you were attacking Huang Zu, he owed the recovery of Xiakou to this same Gan Ning, whom he treated without liberality. When Commander Su Fei recommended Gan Ning for promotion, Huang Zu said, ‘He is unsuited for any high position as, after all, he is no more than a pirate.’

“So Gan Ning became a disappointed and resentful man. Su Fei tried to win him over to good humor and invited him to wine parties and said, ‘I have put your name forward many times, but our chief says he has no place suitable for you. However, time slips away and man’s life is not very long. One must make the most of it. I will put you forward for the magistracy of Exian, whence you may be able to advance.’

“So Gan Ning got away from Xiakou and would have come to you then, but he feared that he would not be welcomed, since he had assisted Huang Zu and killed Ling Cao. I told him you were always ready to welcome able people and would nourish no resentment for former deeds. After all, every person was bound to do his best for his master. He would come with alacrity if he only felt sure of a welcome. I pray you express your pleasure.”

This was good news for Sun Quan, and he said, “With his help, I could destroy Huang Zu.”

Then, Sun Quan bade Lu Meng bring Gan Ning to see him.

When the salutations were over, the chief said, "My heart is entirely captivated by your coming. I feel no resentment against you. I hope you will have no doubts on that score, and I may as well tell you that I desire some plan for the destruction of Huang Zu."

Gan Ning replied, "The dynasty is decadent and without influence. Cao Cao will finally absorb the country down to the river unless he is opposed. Liu Biao provides nothing against the future, and his sons are quite unfitted to succeed him. You should lay your plans to oust him at once before Cao Cao anticipates you. The first attack should be made on Huang Zu, who is getting old and avaricious so that everyone hates him. He is totally unprepared for a fight, and his army is undisciplined. He would fall at the first blow. If he were gone, you would control the western passes and could conquer the lands of Ba and Shu. And you would be securely established."

"The advice is most valuable," said Sun Quan, and he made his preparations.

Zhou Yu was appointed Commander-in-Chief; Lu Meng was Van Leader; Dong Xi and Gan Ning were Generals. Sun Quan himself would command the main army of one hundred thousand troops.

The spies reported these things to Huang Zu, who at the news of an expedition against him, called his officers together to consult. He placed Su Fei in chief command. He also appointed Chen Jiu and Deng Long as Van Leaders, and prepared for general defense. He had two hundreds of warships under the command of Chen Jiu and Deng Long. On these, he placed strong bows and stiff crossbows to the number of more than a thousand and secured the boats to heavy hawsers so that they formed a barrier in the river.

At the approach of the southern fleet, the drums beat for the ships to attack. Soon, arrows and bolts flew thick, forcing back the invaders, who withdrew till several miles of water lay between them and the defenders.

“We must go forward,” said Gan Ning to Dong Xi.

So they chose a hundred light craft and put picked men on them, fifty to a boat. Twenty were to row the boats and thirty to fight. These latter were armored swordsmen. Careless of the enemy’s missiles these boats advanced, got to the defenders’ fleet, and cut the hawsers of their ships so that they drifted hither and thither in confusion.

Gan Ning leaped upon one boat and killed Deng Long. Chen Jiu left the fleet and set out for the shore. Lu Meng dropped into a small boat and went among the larger ships setting them on fire. When Chen Jiu had nearly reached the bank, Lu Meng, reckless of death, went after him, got ahead, and struck him full in the breast so that he fell.

Before long, Su Fei came along the bank with reinforcements, but it was too late. The armies of the South Land had already landed, and there was no hope of repelling them. Su Fei fled into the open country, but he was made prisoner.

Su Fei was taken to Sun Quan who ordered that he be put into a cage-cart and kept till Huang Zu should be captured. Then, he would execute the pair.

And the attack was pressed on. Day and night they wrought to capture Xiakou.

He sees his ships cut loose and burned,
By the Silk-Sailed Pirate he once spurned.

For Huang Zu's fate, see the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IX

CHAPTER 39

AT JINGZHOU, THE SON OF LIU BIAO THRICE BEGS ADVICE; AT BOWANG SLOPE, THE DIRECTING INSTRUCTOR PLANS HIS FIRST BATTLE.

Now Sun Quan fought against Xiakou. When Huang Zu recognized that he was beaten and could not maintain his position, he abandoned Jiangxia and took the road to Jingzhou. Gan Ning, foreseeing this, had laid an ambush outside the east gate of Jiangxia. Soon after the fugitive, with a small following, had burst out of the gate, he found his road blocked.

From horseback, Huang Zu said, "I treated you well in the past. Why do you now press me so hard?"

Gan Ning angrily shouted, "I did good service for you, and yet you treated me as a pirate. Now what have you to say?"

There was nothing to be said, and Huang Zu turned his horse to escape. But Gan Ning thrust aside his troops and he himself rode in pursuit. Then, he heard a shouting in his rear and saw General Cheng Pu coming up. Fearing lest this other pursuer should overpass him and score the success he desired for himself, Gan Ning fitted an arrow to his bow and shot at the fugitive. Huang Zu was hit and fell from his steed. Then, Gan Ning cut off his head. After this, joining himself to Cheng Pu, Gan Ning returned bearing the ghastly trophy to their lord. Sun Quan ordered them to place it in a box to be taken back home and offered as a sacrifice to the manes of his father.

Having rewarded the soldiers for the victory and promoted Gan Ning, Sun Quan next discussed the advisability of sending a force to hold Jiangxia.

But his adviser, Zhang Zhao, said, "It is impossible to try to hold one distant city alone. It is better to return home and prepare for the expedition that Liu Biao will surely send in revenge. We will meet and defeat his worn army, push home the attack, and capture his whole region."

Sun Quan saw the advice was wise, so he left Jiangxia and led his army home to the South Land.

Now Su Fei was still confined, but he got someone to go to Gan Ning to beg him to plead for mercy. Gan Ning had expected this, although the prisoner had said no word, and he was averse to leaving his friend and one-time protector to perish.

"I should not have forgotten him even if he had said nothing," said Gan Ning.

When the army had returned, Sun Quan gave orders for Su Fei's execution that his head might be offered with that of Huang Zu.

Then, Gan Ning went in to his lord and said, weeping, "Long ago, if it had not been for Su Fei, my bones would have been rotting in some ditch, and how, then, could I have rendered service under your banner? Now he deserves death, but I cannot forget his kindness to me, and I pray you take away the honors you have bestowed on me as an offset to his crime."

Sun Quan replied, "Since he once showed kindness to you, I will pardon him for your sake. But what can be done if he runs away?"

“If he be pardoned and escapes death, he will be immeasurably grateful and will not go away. If he should, then will I offer my life in exchange.”

So the condemned man escaped death, and only one head was offered in sacrifice. After the sacrificial ceremonies, a great banquet was spread in honor of the victories. As it was proceeding, suddenly one of the guests burst into loud lamentations, drew his sword, and rushed upon Gan Ning. Gan Ning hastily rose and defended himself with the chair on which he had been sitting. The host looked at the assailant and saw it was Ling Tong, whose father, Ling Cao, had fallen under an arrow shot by Gan Ning. The son was now burning to avenge his father's death.

Hastily leaving his place, Sun Quan checked the angry officer, saying, “If he slew your noble father, then remember: each was fighting for his lord for whom he was bound to exert himself to the utmost. But now that you both are under one flag and are of one house, you may not recall an ancient injury. You must regard my interests continually.”

Ling Tong beat his head upon the floor and cried, saying, “But how can I not avenge this? It is a blood feud, and we may not both live under the same sky.”

The guests interfered, beseeching the man to forgo his revenge, and at last he ceased from his murderous intention. But he sat glaring wrathfully at his enemy.

So soon after, Gan Ning was dispatched with five thousand troops and one hundred warships to guard Xiakou, where he was beyond the reach of Ling Tong's wrath. Then, Sun Quan promoted Ling Tong, and so he was somewhat appeased.

From about this time, the South Land enlarged her fleets, and soldiers were sent to various points to guard the river banks. The brother of the chieftain, Sun Kuang, was placed in command at Wujun, and Sun Quan himself, with a large army, camped at Chaisang.

Zhou Yu, Commander-in-Chief of the army and Supreme Admiral of the navy, was on the Poyang Lake training the naval forces, and general preparations were made for defense and attack.

By his spies, Liu Bei had tidings of the doings in the lower portion of the Great River, and knew of the death of Huang Zu. So he consulted Zhuge Liang as to his action. While they were discussing matters, there arrived a messenger from Liu Biao, begging Liu Bei to go to see him.

Zhuce Liang advised him to go and said, "This call is to consult you about avenging Huang Zu. You must take me with you and let me act as the circumstances direct. There are advantages to be got."

Leaving Guan Yu in command at Xinye, Liu Bei set forth, taking Zhang Fei with five hundred soldiers as his escort.

On the way, he discussed the course of action with his adviser, who said, "First, you must thank Liu Biao for having saved you from the evil that Cai Mao planned against you at Xiangyang. However, you must not undertake any expedition against the South Land, but say you must return to Xinye to put your army in good order."

With this admonition, Liu Bei came to Jingzhou and was lodged in the guesthouse. Zhang Fei and the escort camped without the walls. In due course, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang were received, and after the customary salutations, Liu Bei apologized for his conduct at the banquet.

The host said, "Worthy brother, I know you were the victim of a vile plot, and I should have put the prime mover to death for it, had there not

been so universal a prayer for mercy. However, I remitted that penalty. I hope you do not consider that I was wrong.”

“Cai Mao had little to do with it. I think it was due to his subordinates,” replied Liu Bei.

Liu Biao said, “Jiangxia is lost, as you know, and Huang Zu is dead. So I have asked you to come that we might take measures of vengeance.”

“Huang Zu was harsh and cruel and never used his people in the proper way: that was the real cause of his fall. But have you reflected what Cao Cao may do on the north if we attack the south?”

“I am getting old and weak, and I am unable to manage affairs properly. Will you aid me, brother? After I am gone, you will have this region.”

“Why do you say this, my brother? Think you that I am equal to such a task?” Here, Zhuge Liang glanced at Liu Bei, who continued, “But give me a little time to think it over.”

And at this point he took his leave.

When they had reached their lodging, Zhuge Liang said, “Why did you decline his offer of the region.”

“He has always been most kind and courteous. I could not take advantage of his weakness.”

“A perfectly kind and gracious lord,” sighed Zhuge Liang.

Soon after, the son of the Imperial Protector, Liu Qi, was announced, and Liu Bei received him and led him in.

The young man began to weep, saying, "My mother cannot bear the sight of me. My very life is in danger. Can you not save me, Uncle?"

"My worthy nephew, this is a family affair. You should not come to me."

Zhuge Liang, who was present, smiled. Liu Bei turned to him to know what he should do.

"This is a family affair. I cannot touch it!" replied Zhuge Liang.

The young man soon left, and when Liu Bei was saying goodbye, he whispered, "I will get Zhuge Liang to return your call, and you can do so and so. He will advise you."

Liu Qi thanked him and left. Next day, when the call was to be returned, Liu Bei pretended to be suffering from colic and made that an excuse to send Zhuge Liang to return the call.

The adviser went, and when he had reached the palace, dismounted, and was led in, Liu Qi conducted him into one of the inner rooms.

When the tea had been brought, Liu Qi said, "I am an object of my stepmother's dislike. Can you advise me what to do?"

"As a mere stranger-guest, I can hardly have anything to do with your own 'bone-and-flesh' matters. If I did, and the story got abroad, much harm might ensue." With this, he rose to take leave.

But Liu Qi was unwilling to say farewell, and he said, "Your glory has turned in my direction. You cannot mean to go away so pointlessly."

Liu Qi led his visitor into a private chamber and had refreshments brought. While they ate and drank, Liu Qi repeated his first request: what was he to do since his stepmother disliked him?

"It is not the sort of thing I can advise in," replied Zhuge Liang, as he rose for the second time to take leave.

“Master, if you will not reply, that is well. But why incontinently leave me?”

So the adviser once more seated himself, and Liu Qi said, “There is an ancient writing I should like to show you.” And he led his visitor to a small upper room.

“Where is the writing?” said Zhuge Liang.

Instead of answering, Liu Qi wept, saying, “My stepmother cannot bear me. My life is in danger. O Master, will you not say a word to save me?”

Zhuce Liang flushed and rose to go away. But he found the ladder by which they had mounted had been removed.

Again, Liu Qi besought some advice, saying, “Master, you fear lest it may get abroad! Is that why you are silent? Here we are between earth and sky, and what you say will come out of your mouth directly into my ear. No other soul can hear. Now can you tell me what to do?”

“Sow not dissension among relatives,” said Zhuge Liang. “Is it possible for me to make any plan for you?”

“Then is my life indeed in danger,” said the young man. “I will die at your feet.” So saying, Liu Qi pulled out a dagger and threatened to make an end of himself.

Zhuce Liang checked him, saying, “There is a way.”

“I pray you tell me.”

“You have heard of the old tale of the brothers Shen Sheng and Chong Er, have you not? Shen Sheng stayed at home and died; his brother Chong Er went away and lived in peace. Now that Huang Zu is gone and Jiangxia is weakly defended, why do you not ask to be sent there to guard it? Then you would be out of the way of harm.”

Liu Qi thanked him. Then, he called to his people to restore the ladder, and he escorted Zhuge Liang down to the level ground.

Zhuce Liang returned to Liu Bei and related the whole interview. The young man soon acted on the advice given him, but his father would not at first consent to let him go.

To settle his doubts, Liu Biao sent for Liu Bei, who said, "Jiangxia is important, and your son is the most suitable man to defend it. You must let him go. The southeast will be defended by your son; the northwest I will look after."

"I hear that Cao Cao has been training a naval force, and I am afraid he has intentions against us. We must be on our guard."

"I know all about it. You need feel no anxiety," said Liu Bei.

He took leave of his relative and went home while Liu Qi received command of three thousand soldiers and went to guard Jiangxia.

At this time, Cao Cao suppressed the three highest officers of state and exercised their functions himself as the Prime Minister. He appointed as his general secretaries Mao Jie and Cui Yan, and as literary secretary Sima Yi. Sima Yi of Henei was grandson of Sima Juan, Governor of Yingchuan; son of Sima Fang, Governor of Jingzhao; and younger brother of Sima Lang, Secretary General.

Cao Cao then called his officers to a council to discuss an expedition against the south.

Xiahou Dun opened the debate, saying, "Liu Bei is drilling his army at Xinye, and is a source of danger. He should be destroyed."

Accordingly, Xiahou Dun was appointed Commanding General, and four assistants—Yu Jin, Li Dian, Xiahou Lan, and Han Hao—were given him. With these, he led one hundred thousand troops to Bowang, whence he could observe Xinye.

Xun Yu was opposed to this and said, “Liu Bei is a famous warrior, and he has lately taken to himself as his Directing Instructor Zhuge Liang. Caution is needed!”

Xiahou Dun replied, “Liu Bei is a mean rat! I will certainly take him prisoner.”

“Do not despise him,” said Xu Shu. “Remember he has Zhuge Liang to help him, and so he is like a tiger who has grown wings.”

Cao Cao said, “Who is this Zhuge Liang?”

“He has taken a Daoist cognomen of Sleeping Dragon. He is a perfect genius, god and devil combined, the greatest marvel of the age. Do not despise him.”

“How does he stand as compared with you?” asked Cao Cao.

“There is no comparison. I am a mere glowworm spark; he is the glory of the full moon,” replied Xu Shu.

“You are mistaken,” replied Xiahou Dun. “This Zhuge Liang of yours is of no account. Who would fear him? If I do not take him and his master prisoners in the first battle, then here is my head, a free gift to our lord, the Prime Minister.”

“Hasten to comfort me with news of victory,” said Cao Cao.

Xiahou Dun hastened to depart.

The advent of Zhuge Liang and the extravagant deference shown him did not please Liu Bei's sworn Brothers, who grumbled, saying, "He is very young, although he is clever and learned. Our Brother really treats him too well. We have not seen any evidence of his wonderful skill."

Liu Bei replied, "You do not know his worth. I have him as if the fish has got into the water again. Pray do not discuss this matter further, my Brothers."

They withdrew, silent but dissatisfied.

One day, a man presented Liu Bei with a yak's tail, and he at once was trying to weave it into his cap as an ornament. Zhuge Liang came in and noticed it at once.

"Then you have renounced all ambitions, my lord. You are just going to attend to this sort of thing," Zhuge Liang quietly remarked.

Liu Bei snatched off his cap and flung it away, saying, "I was only amusing myself with the thing."

"How do you think you stand compared with Cao Cao?" asked Zhuge Liang.

"Inferior."

"Yes. Your army is less than ten thousand, and the chances are ten thousand to one that he will attack. How can we meet him?"

"I am greatly distressed about it, but I see no way."

"You might recruit, and I will train them. Then we might be able to oppose him."

So recruiting began and three thousand were enlisted. Zhuge Liang set about drilling them diligently.

Soon, they heard that Xiahou Dun was leading an army of one hundred thousand troops against them.

When he heard it, Zhang Fei said to his Brother Guan Yu, "We will get this Zhuge Liang to go and fight them."

Just at that moment, they were summoned to their Brother, who asked their advice.

"Why not send the 'Water,' brother?" said Zhang Fei.

"For method, I rely on Zhuge Liang; for action, I put my faith in you, my Brothers. Are you going to fail me?"

They went out, and Zhuge Liang was called.

"I fear your Brothers will not obey me," said Zhuge Liang. "Wherefore, if I am to direct the campaign, you must give me a seal of office and a sword of authority."

So Liu Bei gave him both. Armed with these ensigns of power, Zhuge Liang assembled the officers to receive their orders.

"We will go just to see what he will do," said Zhang Fei to Guan Yu.

In the assembly, Zhuge Liang spoke, saying, "On the left of Bowang are Yushan Hills. On the right is Anlin Forest. There we will prepare an ambush. Guan Yu will go to Yushan Hills with one thousand soldiers. He is to remain there quiescent till the enemy has passed; when he sees a flame in the south, that will be the signal to attack. He will first burn their baggage train. Zhang Fei will go to a valley behind Anlin Forest. When he sees the signal, he is to go to the old stores depot at Bowang and burn that. Liu Feng and Guan Ping will take five hundred soldiers each to the south, prepare combustibles and be ready with them beyond Bowang Slope. The enemy will arrive about dusk, and then the two generals can start the blare. Zhao Yun, now recalled from Fancheng, is to lead the attack, but he is to lose and not win. And our lord is to command the reserve. See that each one obeys these orders and let there be no mistakes."

Then said Guan Yu, "All of us are to go out to meet the enemy, but I have not yet heard what you are going to do."

"I will just be sitting here, guarding the city."

Zhang Fei burst into a laugh, "We are to go out to bloody battle, and you are to stay quietly at home, quite comfortable."

"Here is the sword and here the seal!" replied the strategist, displaying the emblems of authority. "Disobedience of orders will be death."

Liu Bei said, "Do you not understand that the plans elaborated in a little chamber decide success over thousands of miles? Do not disobey the command, my Brothers."

Zhang Fei went out smiling cynically.

Guan Yu remarked, "Let us await the result. If he fails, then we can look to it."

The Brothers left. None of the officers understood anything of the general line of strategy, and though they obeyed orders, they were not without doubts and misgivings.

Zhuge Liang said to Liu Bei, "You may now lead your soldiers to the hills and camp till the enemy shall arrive tomorrow evening. Then, you are to abandon the camp and move away retreating till the signal is seen. Then you will advance and attack with all force. Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, and I will guard the city."

In the city, Zhuge Liang prepared banquets to celebrate the victory and also prepared the books to record exceptional services.

Liu Bei noted all these things, but his heart was also troubled more than a little.

Cao Cao's army of one hundred thousand troops, in due course, reached Bowang. Then, half of them—the veterans—were told off for the first attack, and the remainder were to guard the baggage train and supplies. Thus they marched in two divisions. The season was autumn, and a chilly wind began to blow.

They pressed forward. Presently, they saw a cloud of dust ahead of them, and Xiahou Dun ordered the ranks to be reformed. He questioned the guides as to the name of the place.

“The place in front is Bowang Slope, and behind us is the River Luo,” was the reply.

Then, Xiahou Dun rode to the front to reconnoiter, leaving Yu Jin and Li Dian to finish setting out the battle array.

Presently, Xiahou Dun began to laugh, and when they asked the cause of this merriment, he replied, “Xu Shu praised Zhuge Liang to the very skies as something more than human. But now that I see how he has placed his soldiers and the stuff he has put into his vanguard, it seems to me that he is sending dogs or sheep against tigers and leopards. I bragged a little when I said I would take him prisoner, but I am going to make good my boast!”

Then, he rode forward at full speed.

Zhao Yun rode to meet him, and Xiahou Dun opened a volley of abuse, “You lot, followers of Liu Bei, are only like wraiths following devils!”

This angered Zhao Yun, and a combat began. In a little time, Zhao Yun turned and retreated as if he was worsted. Xiahou Dun pressed after him and kept up the chase for some three miles. Then, Zhao Yun suddenly turned again and offered fight, but only to retreat after a few passes.

Seeing these tactics, Han Hao, one of Xiahou Dun's generals, rode up to his chief and urged him to use caution, saying, “I fear he is trying to lead

us into an ambush.”

“With such antagonists as these, I should not fear even ten ambushes!” replied Xiahou Dun, pressing forward eagerly.

Just as he reached the slope, he heard the roar of a bomb, and out came Liu Bei to attack.

“Here is your ambush!” said Xiahou Dun, laughing. “I will get to Xinye this evening before I have finished.”

Xiahou Dun urged his soldiers forward, and his opponents retired in measure as he advanced. As evening came on, thick clouds overcast the whole sky. The wind increased, but the leader still urged his troops after the retreating foe.

The two generals in the rear came to a narrow part of the road with reeds and rushes thick all round them.

“Those who despise the enemy are beaten,” said Li Dian to Yu Jin. “Away south, there the roads are narrow, and streams and mountains make the country difficult. The forests are dense, and if the enemy uses fire, we should be lost.”

“You are right,” replied Yu Jin. “I will get on and warn the Commanding General. Perhaps he will stop. You can halt those who come up.”

Yu Jin rode forward shouting at the top of his voice, “Halt the train!”

Xiahou Dun saw him coming up and asked what the matter was.

Yu Jin said, “The roads here are narrow and difficult. Around us are thick forests. What if they use fire?”

Xiahou Dun’s ferocity had then somewhat abated, and he turned his steed toward his main body.

Then, there arose a shout behind him. A rushing noise came from in the reeds and great tongues of flame shot up here and there. These spread, and soon the fire was in “the four quarters and the eight sides,” and fanned by a strong wind.

Xiahou Dun’s troops were thrown into confusion and trampled each other down. Many perished. Zhao Yun turned on them again to make a slaughter. Xiahou Dun dashed through the fire and smoke to escape.

Now Li Dian saw that things were going very badly, so he turned to get back to Bowang but fell upon a body of troops in the way, led by Guan Yu. He desperately dashed into their midst and managed to get clear. Yu Jin saw the supplies were being destroyed and there was nothing left to guard, so he escaped along a bypath. Two other generals, who came to try to save the baggage train, met Zhang Fei; Xiahou Lan was slain forthwith, but Han Hao managed to flee. Next morning, the countryside was strewn with corpses and drenched with blood.



The armies met on Bowang Slope
And Zhuge Liang fought with fire;
A perfect strategist, he bent
All humans to his desire.
But poor Cao Cao, his enemy,
He trembled in his shoes
Before the man, who’d never fought
But yet could armies use.



Xiahou Dun drew up the battered remains of his army and led them back to Xuchang.

Zhuge Liang ordered his armies to collect.

As Guan Yu and Zhang Fei rode homeward, they confessed, saying, “Zhuge Liang is really a fine strategist!”

Before long, they saw Mi Zhu and Mi Fang leading out a small body of soldiers. Among them was a light carriage in which the Directing Instructor Zhuge Liang was seated. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei dismounted and bowed before him. The remaining bodies came in. The spoil was distributed among the soldiers and all returned to Xinye, where the populace lined the roads to bid them welcome.

“We owe our lives to the Prince!” they cried to Liu Bei.

Said Zhuge Liang, “Xiahou Dun has been driven off, but Cao Cao will come with a stronger force.”

“And what shall we do?” replied Liu Bei.

“My plan is quite ready,” said Zhuge Liang.

Always battles, nowhere rest for horse or man;
Must rely on ruses, dodging where one can.

The plan prepared against Cao Cao will be unfolded in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act IX

CHAPTER 40

LADY CAI RENOUNCES JINGZHOU; ZHUGE LIANG BURNS XINYE.

When Liu Bei asked how his adviser hoped to repel Cao Cao, Zhuge Liang replied, "Xinye is a small city and unfitted for our lengthy occupation. Liu Biao is ill and failing fast, so this is the time to take his region as a base where we may be safe against Cao Cao."

"You speak well, but Liu Biao has shown me great kindness, and I could not bear to serve him an ill turn."

"If you do not take this opportunity, you will regret it ever after," said Zhuge Liang.

"I would rather perish than do what is wrong."

"We will discuss it again," replied Zhuge Liang.

When Xiahou Dun reached the capital, he presented himself to his master in bonds and craved death. But his master loosed him and let him tell his tale.

And Xiahou Dun said, "I was the victim of Zhuge Liang's evil machinations: he attacked with fire."

"As a soldier from your youth, you should have remembered that fire was a likely weapon in narrow roads."

"Li Dian and Yu Jin reminded me. I am sorry enough now."

Cao Cao rewarded Li Dian and Yu Jin, who had warned their leader.

“Liu Bei, as strong as he is now, certainly is a menace to our existence, and he must be quickly destroyed,” said Xiahou Dun.

“He is one of my anxieties,” replied Cao Cao. “Sun Quan is the other. The rest do not count. We must take this chance to sweep the south clean.”

Then, orders were issued to prepare an army of five hundred thousand troops, in five divisions of ten legions each. Each division had two leaders: Cao Ren and Cao Hong were in command of the first division; Zhang Liao and Zhang He, the second; Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan, the third; Yu Jin and Li Dian, the fourth. The fifth body was led by Cao Cao himself. The vanguard was commanded by Xu Chu. The “horse” day of the seventh moon of the thirteenth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 208) was fixed for the march.

The High Minister, Kong Rong, offered a remonstrance. He said, “Liu Bei and Liu Biao are both of the Imperial House and should not be attacked without grave reasons. Sun Quan in the six territories of the South Land is terrible as a crouching tiger, and with the Great River as his defense, he is very secure. If, Sir Prime Minister, you undertake this unjustifiable expedition, you will forfeit the respect of the world, I fear.”

“All three of them are disobedient ministers and rebels, and how can I fail to punish them?” replied Cao Cao.

Cao Cao was angry, and bade the adviser go from his presence. Presently, Cao Cao gave formal orders that he would put to death anyone who remonstrated on the subject of his expedition.

Kong Rong went forth from the Palace sadly.

Casting his eyes up to heaven, he cried, “Where is the chance of success when the perfectly inhumane attacks the perfectly humane? He must be defeated!”

One of the clients of the Imperial Inspector Chi Lu, whom Kong Rong had always treated contemptuously and disdainfully, happened to hear this apostrophe and told his patron, who carried the tale to Cao Cao.

Chi Lu also added to it, saying, “Kong Rong habitually speaks disrespectfully of the Chief Minister and has been very friendly with Mi Heng. In fact, the insults that Mi Heng had hurled at you had been deliberately arranged and intrigued by Kong Rong. Kong Rong and Mi Heng seemed to admire each other hugely, and Mi Heng used to say, ‘Confucius is not dead, because Kong Rong is he,’ and the other used to reply, ‘And his treasured disciple, Yan Hui, has risen again, because Mi Heng is he.’”

Chi Lu’s tale angered Cao Cao, who ordered the execution of the high minister.

Now Kong Rong had two sons, both young, who were sitting at home playing chess, when one of their servants ran in and said, “Your father has just been carried off for execution. Why do you not run away?”

The youths replied, “When the nest is pulled down, are the eggs left unbroken?”

Even at that moment, the same executors came and carried off the whole household. The two youths were beheaded. The father’s corpse was exposed in the streets.

Minister Zhi Xi wept over the corpse. This public exhibition of sympathy rekindled Cao Cao’s anger, and he was going to punish it with death.

However, this additional punishment was prevented by Adviser Xun Yu, who said, “You should not slay a righteous man who came to mourn

over his friend's corpse. Zhi Xi had often warned Kong Rong against the danger his severe rectitude might lead him into."

Zhi Xi took up the remains of father and sons and buried them.



Kong Rong, who dwelt on the north sea shore,
A noble reputation bore;
With him all guests warm welcome found,
And ceaselessly the wine went round.
For skill in letters he was famed,
In speech, he dukes and princes shamed,
Historians his merits tell,
Recorders say that he did well.



After wreaking his wrath on Kong Rong, Cao Cao issued the order to march. Xun Yu was left in command of the capital.

About this time, the Imperial Protector of Jingzhou became seriously ill, and he summoned Liu Bei to his chamber. Liu Bei went accompanied by his two Brothers, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, and Directing Instructor Zhuge Liang.

Liu Biao said, "The disease has attacked my very vitals, and my time is short. I confide my orphans to your guardianship. My sons are unfit to

succeed to my place, and I pray you, my brother, administer the region after my death.”

Liu Bei wept, saying, “I will do my utmost to help my nephews. What else could I do, indeed?”

Even at this moment came the news of the march of Cao Cao’s armies, and Liu Bei, taking hasty leave of his kinsman, was forced to hurry to his station. The evil tidings aggravated the sick man’s condition, and he began to make his last arrangements. In his testament, he appointed Liu Bei the guardian of his son Liu Qi, who was to succeed in the lordship.

This arrangement greatly angered his wife, Lady Cai. She closed the inner doors against all and confided to her own partisans, of whom Cai Mao and Zhang Yun were her confidants, the keeping of the outer gates.

The heir was at Jiangxia, and he came to make filial inquiries as soon as his father’s condition became serious.

But Cai Mao refused him admittance and said, “Your father sent you to guard Jiangxia. Such a very responsible post should by no means have been quit without orders. Suppose it was attacked: what might not happen? If your father sees you, he will be very angry, and it will make him worse. That would be most undutiful; you should return to your command at once.”

Liu Qi stood out for some time, but admittance was denied him in spite of his tears. So he returned to his post.

Meanwhile Liu Biao rapidly grew worse. He anxiously looked for his son, but Liu Qi came not. Suddenly, Liu Biao uttered piercing shrieks and then passed away.



When the Yuans were lords of the north,
And Liu Biao held the bank of the river,
It seemed, so strong were they both,
That they would endure forever.
But the family affairs troubled their states,
And, meddling, confusion made;
It was mournful indeed to see
How quickly the houses decayed.



So Imperial Protector Liu Biao died. Then, the widow and her partisans took counsel together and forged a testament conferring the lordship of Jingzhou on the second son, Liu Cong before they published the news of the death.

The wrongful heir was then fourteen years of age. But he was a cunning boy, so he assembled the officials and said, “My father has passed away, and my elder brother is at Jiangxia. More than that, our uncle is at Xinye. You have made me lord, but if my brother and uncle come here with an army to punish me for usurping the lordship, what explanation can I offer?”

At first, no one replied.

Then, Adviser Li Gui rose and said, “You speak well. Now, hasten to send letters of mourning to your brother and ask him to come and take his inheritance. Also call upon Liu Bei to come and assist in the administration. Then shall we be safe against our enemies—Cao Cao on the north and Sun Quan on the south. I consider this the most excellent plan.”

But Cai Mao replied harshly, “Who are you to speak thus wildly and oppose the testament of our late lord?”

Li Gui began to abuse him, saying, “You and your party have fabricated this testament, setting aside the rightful heir. Now the whole region is in the hands of the Cai family. If our dead lord knew your doings, he would slay you!”

Cai Mao ordered the lictors to take Li Gui away to execution. He was hurried out, but his tongue ceased not.

So the younger son was placed in his father’s seat, and the Cai clan shared among them the whole military authority of the region. The defense of Jingzhou was confided to Liu Xin and Deng Yi, while Lady Cai and her son took up their residence in Xiangyang so as to be out of the reach of the rightful heir and his uncle. They interred the remains of the late Imperial Protector on the east of Xiangyang, near the bank of the Han River. No notice of the death was sent to Liu Qi, the son, or to Liu Bei, his uncle.

Liu Cong arrived at Xiangyang, but, before he had had time to recover from the fatigue of the journey, the startling news of the approach of Cao Cao’s great army came in. He summoned Kuai Yue, Cai Mao, and others to ask counsel.

One of the secretaries, Fu Xuan, offered his advice, saying, “Not only are we threatened by a great army from the north, but the elder son, who is the real heir, at Jiangxia, and his uncle at Xinye, are to be reckoned with. These two have not been notified of the death, and they will resent that. We shall be in sad case if they also march against us. But if you will adopt my

suggestion, then our people will be as steady as the Taishan Mountains and our young lord's position and rank will be assured."

"What is your plan?" asked the young lord.

"To offer the whole region to Cao Cao, who will treat our young master most liberally."

"What advice!" said Liu Cong angrily. "Am I to yield my heritage to another before I have even fairly succeeded to it?"

"The advice is good," said Kuai Yue. "Opportunism is a policy, and possibilities need consideration. In the name of government, Cao Cao is fighting against his neighbors. If our lord opposes him, he will be termed contumacious. Beside, any misfortune on our borders before our young lord is well established will reflect upon the internal administration, and our people will be panic-stricken at the mere news of the approach of a hostile army. How could we then offer any resistance?"

Liu Cong replied, "It is not that I disagree with you, but I should be a laughing stock to the whole world were I to abandon my heritage without an effort."

He was interrupted by a speaker who said, "If their advice is good, why not follow it?"

They turned toward the speaker who was a certain Wang Can of Shanyang, a lean, cadaverous individual much below the middle height of a man.

However, his talents did not conform to his physical appearance. When he was yet a youth, Wang Can went to visit Minister Cai Yong, then a vice-chairman of the Secretariat; although many guests of exalted rank were present, the host hastened to welcome the newcomer with the greatest

deference. The others were astonished and asked why he was so respectful to a mere youth.

“He is a young man with the highest gifts,” said Cai Yong.

Wang Can was widely read and had a most retentive memory, better than any of his contemporaries. If he glanced at a roadside monument as he passed, he remembered every word of the inscription. If he saw people playing chess and the board was suddenly overthrown, he could replace every pip in its proper place. He was a good mathematician, and his poems were exquisite. At seventeen, he was appointed a court official but did not take up the appointment. When the disturbance in the empire grew serious, he sought refuge in Jingzhou, where he was received with great honor as a guest of the Imperial Protector.

What he said was this: “General, how do you compare with Cao Cao?”

“Inferior,” replied Liu Cong.

Wang Can continued, “Cao Cao has many soldiers and bold leaders. He is able and resourceful. He took Lu Bu at Xiapi and broke the power of Yuan Shao at Guandu. He pursued Liu Bei into Longyou and destroyed Mao Dun at White Wolf Hills. The destruction of such firmly established men shows his invincible character. Now he is on the way here, and it will be very difficult to withstand him. The plan proposed is the best you can expect, and you should not delay and hesitate till it is too late for ought but regret.”

“Worthy Sir, you indeed speak to the point. I must inform my mother,” said the young ruler.

But just then they saw his mother appear from behind a screen. She had been listening to all that was said.

“Why refer to me when three such gentlemen coincide in their opinions?” said Lady Cai.

So Liu Cong decided, and the letter of surrender was composed and entrusted to one Song Zhong to convey secretly to Cao Cao. Song Zhong went straight to Wancheng and presented the letter. It was received with joy and the bearer well-rewarded.

The submission was accepted, and Cao Cao said, “Tell Liu Cong to go out to meet me in the open country, and he will be in perpetual tenure of his land.”

Song Zhong left the city and took the homeward way. He had nearly reached the ferry when he fell in with a party of horsemen. On a closer look, he saw the leader was Guan Yu. The messenger tried to escape observation, but was presently captured and taken to the leader to be questioned. At first, he prevaricated but on being closely questioned told the whole story. Then, he was carried off to Xinye and made to retell his story to Liu Bei, who heard it with lamentations.

Zhang Fei said, “This being so, I propose that we put this fellow to death, then cross the river, attack Xiangyang, and make an end for the Cai tribe and Liu Cong, as well. Then, we can attack Cao Cao.”

But Liu Bei replied, “Hold on. I have something more to say.”

Then, turning to the prisoner, Liu Bei shouted, “When they did all this, why did you not come to tell me? As things are now, there is nothing to be gained by killing you. You may go.”

Song Zhong stammered his thanks, threw his arms over his head, and ran away. Liu Bei was very sad.

Presently, Yi Ji from Jiangxia was announced. Liu Bei was very fond of this man and went down the steps to welcome him.

Then, said Yi Ji, “The heir has heard that his father is dead, but his stepmother and her family are keeping back the news so that they may set up Liu Cong. He knows the news is true, as he sent a special messenger to find out. He thinks you, O Prince, may not know and has sent me to inform you, and his letter begs you to lead all the troops you can to Xiangyang to help him assert his claims.”

Liu Bei opened and read the letter. Then, he said, “Yes. You know that the younger son has usurped the lordship, but you have not heard that he has already sent to offer Jingzhou to Cao Cao.”

This news shocked Yi Ji, who asked, “How know you this?”

Liu Bei told of the capture of Song Zhong.

Yi Ji said, “You can go to Xiangyang as if to attend the mourning ceremonies and so draw Liu Cong into coming out of the city to welcome you. Then you can seize him, slay his party, and take the region.”

“Your advice is good,” said Zhuge Liang, “and my lord ought to take it.”

Liu Bei wept, saying, “In his last interview, my brother confided his son and heir to my care. If I lay hands upon another son and seize upon the inheritance, how shall I be able to look my brother in the face when I meet him by and by beyond the grave?”

“If you do not act in this way now, how will you repel Cao Cao, who has already reached Wancheng?” said Zhuge Liang.

“Our best plan is to take refuge in Fancheng,” replied Liu Bei.

Just about this time, the spies came to say that Cao Cao’s army had reached Bowang. So Yi Ji was sent off with instructions to take measures

for the defense of Jiangxia, while Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang discussed plans for meeting the enemy.

Zhugge Liang said, "My lord should not worry. We have burned the army of Cao Cao at Bowang Slope, so we will see them fallen into another ruse in Xinye. This is no place to live in. We will move over to Fancheng."

Then, notices were posted at all the gates that all the people, without any exception, were to follow their ruler at once to the new city to escape danger. Boats were prepared and the people sent away under the direction of Sun Qian. Mi Zhu saw to the safe conveyance of the families of the officials.

Then, the officers assembled for orders.

Zhugge Liang gave directions, "Guan Yu is to go to the north of the White River with one thousand troops. His men are to carry bags to fill with sand and earth to dam the river till the enemy shall be heard, about the third hour next day. Then, the waters are to be freed to drown one of the armies. He is then to march down river.

"Zhang Fei is to go to the Boling Ferry, where the current is slow. After the waters of the White River have been let loose on Cao Cao's soldiers, they will try to get over the river at the ferry. They are to be attacked by Zhang Fei and his one thousand troops.

"Zhao Yun is to divide three thousand troops into four parties and take one to the east gate. The other three are for the other gates. The roofs of the houses within the city walls are piled with sulfur, saltpeter, and other combustibles. The intention is to set fire to the city when the army of the enemy has entered it for shelter. There will be a strong breeze next day in the evening which will fan the flames. When this wind begins to blow, fire arrows are to be shot into the city from all sides. When the flames are high, there is to be a great shouting outside to add to the general terror. The east

gate is to be left free for escape, but the flying men are to be smitten after passing the gate.

“Mi Fang and Liu Feng are to take command of two thousand troops, one half with red flags and the other half with blue. They are to go to Magpie Tail Slope, about ten miles from the city and camp. When they see Cao Cao’s army coming along, the red flags are to move left and the blue right to confuse the enemy so that they shall be afraid to advance further. Then an ambush is to be laid to smite the enemy when the fire in Xinye starts. After that, Mi Fang and Liu Feng are to go to the river to meet us.

“After the battle, all generals shall gather at Fancheng.”

All the orders given, the various leaders went their way to take up their positions and await the burning of the city. Zhuge Liang and Liu Bei went away to an eminence whence they could watch what happened and where they would await the reports of victory.

Cao Hong and Cao Ren, with their one hundred thousand troops, preceded by Xu Chu leading three thousand of mailed men, marched toward Xinye. They formed a mighty host and reached Magpie Tail Slope about noon. Looking ahead, they saw what seemed a goodly army with many blue and red flags. Xu Chu pressed forward. As he neared, the flags moved from side to side, and he hesitated.

He began to think, *It could be an ambush. It is unwise to advance.*

Finally, Xu Chu decided to go no farther and called a halt, and he rode back to the main body to see Cao Ren.

“Those troops are only make-believe,” said Cao Ren. “Advance, there is no ambush. I will hasten up the supports.”

So Xu Chu rode to his own command again and advanced. When he reached the wood where he had seen the flags, he saw no one at all. It was then late in the afternoon, but he decided to move on.

Then, he heard from the hills the sound of musical instruments and, looking up, saw on the hilltop two umbrellas surrounded by many banners. There sat Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang, quietly drinking.

Angry at their coolness, Xu Chu sought for a way up, but logs of wood and great stones were thrown down, and he was driven back. Further, from the rear of the hills came a confused roar. He could find no way to attack, and the sun began to set.

Then Cao Ren and Cao Hong arrived and ordered an attack on Xinye that he might have a place to rest in. They marched to the walls and found the gates wide open. They entered and found a deserted city. No one was visible.

“This shows they are done,” said Cao Hong. “They have all run away, people and all. We may as well occupy the city and rest our soldiers ready for tomorrow.”

The soldiers were fatigued with marching, and hungry as well, so they lost no time in scattering among the houses and setting about preparing food in the deserted kitchens. The leaders took up their quarters in the state residence to rest.

After the first bell, the wind began to blow. Soon after, the gate guards reported that a fire had started.

“The careless men have let sparks fly about,” said Cao Ren.

He thought no more about it just then, but along came other reports of like nature, and soon he realized that fires breaking out in all quarters were not due to accident. So he gave orders to evacuate the city. Soon the whole

city seemed on fire, and a red glow hung in the sky. The army was beset with fire fiercer than what Xiahou Dun had experienced at Bowang Slope.



Thrice wicked was Cao Cao, but he was bold;
Though all in the capital he controlled,
Yet with this he was not content,
So southward his ravaging army went.
But, the autumn wind aiding, the Spirit of Fire
Wrought to his army destruction dire.



Officers and troops dashing through the smoke and fire in utter confusion sought some way of escape, and hearing that the east gate was free, they made for that quarter. Out they rushed pell-mell, many being trodden down and trampled to death. Those who got through took the road to the east.

But presently there was a shouting behind them, and Zhao Yun's company came up and attacked. Then, Cao Cao's troops scattered, each fleeing for his life. No stand was made. A little later, Mi Fang and Liu Feng came to take another toll. The fleeing Cao Ren then had very few followers, and those left him were scorched and burned.

They directed their way to the White River, joyfully remembering that the river was shallow and fordable. And they went down into the stream and drank their fill, humans shouting and horses neighing.

Meantime, Guan Yu, higher up its course, had dammed the river with sandbags so that its waters were collected in a lake. Toward evening he had seen the red glow of the burning city and began to look out for his signal.

About the fourth hour, he heard downstream the sounds of soldiers and horses and at once ordered the breaking of the dam. The water rushed down in a torrent and overwhelmed the men just then in the bed of the river. Many were swept away and drowned. Those who escaped made their way to where the stream ran gently and got away.

Presently, Cao Ren and his troops reached the Boling Ferry. Here, where they thought there would be safety, they found the road barred.

“You Cao Cao brigands!” shouted Zhang Fei. “Come and receive your fate!”

Within the city, the red flame leaps out;
On the river bank, burning anger is met.

What happened will appear in later chapters.



END OF ACT IX

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT X:

LIU BEI'S EXODUS:

THE PURSUIT AT DANGYANG

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act X

CHAPTER 41

LIU BEI LEADS HIS PEOPLE OVER THE RIVER; ZHAO YUN RESCUES THE
CHILD LORD AT DANGYANG.

The last chapter closed with the attack made by Zhang Fei as soon as his Brother had let loose the waters on the doomed army. He met with Xu Chu and a combat began, but a fight with such a warrior was not to Xu Chu's taste, and he ran away. Zhang Fei followed till he came upon Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang, and the three went upstream till they came to the boats that had been prepared by Liu Feng and Mi Fang, when they all crossed over and marched toward Fancheng. As soon as they disembarked, Zhuge Liang ordered the boats and rafts to be burned.

Cao Ren gathered in the remnants of his army and camped at Xinye, while his colleague Cao Hong went to tell their lord the evil tidings of defeat.

“How dare he, this rustic Zhuge Liang!” exclaimed Cao Cao angrily.

Cao Cao then hastily sent an overwhelming army to camp near the place and gave orders for enormous works against the city, leveling hills and turning rivers to launch a violent assault on Fancheng from every side at once.

Then, Liu Ye came in to see his lord and said, “Sir, you are new to this region, and you should win over the people's hearts. Liu Bei has moved all the people from Xinye to Fancheng. If we march through the country, the

people will be ground to powder. It would be well to call upon Liu Bei first to surrender, which will prove to the people that you have a care for them. If he yields, then we get Jingzhou without fighting.”

Cao Cao agreed and asked who would be a suitable messenger. Liu Ye suggested Xu Shu. “He is a close friend of Liu Bei, and he is here with the army,” said Liu Ye.

“But he will not come back,” objected Cao Cao.

“If he does not return, he will be a laughing stock to the whole world. He will come back.”

Xu Shu was sent for, and Cao Cao said, “My first intention was to level Fancheng with the ground. But out of pity for its people, you may carry an offer to Liu Bei that if he will surrender, he will not only not be punished but he shall be given rank. But if he holds on his present misguided course, the whole of his followers shall be destroyed. Now you are an honest man and so I confide this mission to you, and I trust you will not disappoint me.”

Xu Shu said nothing but accepted his orders and went to the city, where he was received by both Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang. They enjoyed a talk over old times before Xu Shu mentioned the object of his mission.

Then he said, “Cao Cao has sent me to invite you to surrender, thereby making a bid for popularity. But you ought also to know that he intends to attack the city from every point, that he is damming up the White River’s waters to be sent against you, and I fear you will not be able to hold the city. You ought to prepare.”

Liu Bei asked Xu Shu to remain with them, but Xu Shu said, “That is impossible, for all the world would ridicule me if I stayed. My old mother is dead, and I never forget my resentment. My body may be over there, but I

swear never to form a plan for Cao Cao. You have the Sleeping Dragon to help you and need have no anxiety about the ultimate achievement of your undertaking. But I must go.”

And Xu Shu took his leave. Liu Bei felt he could not press his friend to stay. Xu Shu returned to Cao Cao’s camp and reported that Liu Bei had no intention of surrender. This angered Cao Cao, who gave orders to begin the advance and siege.

When Liu Bei asked what Zhuge Liang meant to do, Zhuge Liang replied, “We shall abandon Fancheng and take Xiangyang.”

“But what of the people who have followed us? They cannot be abandoned.”

“You can tell them to do as they wish. They may come if they like, or remain here.”

They sent Guan Yu to prepare boats and told Sun Qian to proclaim to the people that Cao Cao was coming, that the city could not be defended, and those who wished to do so might cross the river with the army.

All the people cried, “We will follow the Prince even if it be to death!”

They started at once, some lamenting, some weeping, the young helping the aged, parents leading their children, the strong soldiers carrying the women. As the crowds crossed the river, from both banks arose the sound of lamentation.

Liu Bei was much affected as he saw all this from the boat.

“Why was I ever born,” said he, “to be the cause of all this misery to the people?” He made to leap into the river, but they held him back. All

were deeply sympathetic.

When the boat reached the southern shore, he looked back at the weeping crowds waiting still on the other bank and was again moved to tears. He bade Guan Yu hasten the boats before he mounted and rode on.

When Xiangyang came in sight, they saw many flags flying on the walls and that the moat was protected by barbed barriers.

Liu Bei checked his horse and called out, "Liu Cong, good nephew! I only wish to save the people and nothing more. I pray you quickly open the gates."

But Liu Cong was too frightened to appear. Cai Mao and Zhang Yun went up to one of the fighting towers and ordered the soldiers to shoot arrows down on those without the walls. The people gazed up at the towers and wept aloud.

Suddenly, there appeared a general, with a small following, who cried out, "Cai Mao and Zhang Yun are two traitors. The princely Liu Bei is a most upright man and has come here to preserve his people. Why do you repulse him?"

All looked at this man. He was of eight-span height, with a face dark-brown as a ripe date. He was from Yiyang and named Wei Yan. At that moment, he looked very terrible, whirling his sword as if about to slice up the gate guards. They lost no time in throwing open the gate and dropping the bridge.

"Come in, Uncle Liu Bei," cried Wei Yan, "and bring your army to slay these traitors!"

Zhang Fei plunged forward to take Cai Mao and Zhang Yun, but he was checked by his Brother, who said, "Do not frighten the people!"

Thus, Wei Yan let in Liu Bei. As soon as he entered, he saw a general galloping up with a few men.

The newcomer yelled, "Wei Yan, you nobody! How dare you create trouble? Do you not know me, General Wen Ping?"

Wei Yan turned angrily, set his spear, and galloped forward to attack the general. The soldiers joined in the fray, and the noise of battle rose to the skies.

"I wanted to preserve the people, and I am only causing them injury," cried Liu Bei, distressed. "I do not wish to enter the city."

"Jiangling is an important point. We will first take that as a place to dwell in," said Zhuge Liang.

"That pleases me greatly," said Liu Bei.

So they led the people thither and away from Xiangyang. Many of the inhabitants of that city took advantage of the confusion to escape, and they also joined themselves to Liu Bei.

Meanwhile, within the inhospitable city, Wei Yan and Wen Ping fought. The battle continued for four or five watches, all through the middle of the day, and nearly all the combatants fell. Then, Wei Yan got away. As he could not find Liu Bei, he rode off to Changsha and sought an asylum with Governor Han Xuan.

Liu Bei wandered away from the city of Xiangyang that had refused shelter. Soldiers and people, his following numbered more than a hundred

thousand. The carts numbered scores of thousands, and the burden-bearers were innumerable. Their road led them past the tomb of Liu Biao, and Liu Bei turned aside to bow at the grave.

He lamented, saying, "Shameful is thy brother, lacking both in virtue and in talents. I refused to bear the burden you wished to lay upon me, wherein I was wrong. But the people committed no sin. I pray your glorious spirit descend and rescue these people."

His prayer was fraught with sorrow, and all those about him wept.

Just then, a scout rode up with the news that Fancheng was already taken by Cao Cao and that his army were preparing boats and rafts to cross the river.

The generals of Liu Bei said, "Jiangling is a defensible shelter, but with this crowd, we can only advance very slowly, and when can we reach the city? If Cao Cao pursues, we shall be in a parlous state. Our counsel is to leave the people to their fate for a time and press on to Jiangling."

But Liu Bei wept, saying, "The success of every great enterprise depends upon humanity. How can I abandon these people who have joined me?"

Those who heard him repeat this noble sentiment were greatly affected.



In time of stress his heart was tender toward the
people,
And he wept as he went down into the ship,
Moving the hearts of soldiers to sympathy.
Even today, in the countryside,

Fathers and elders recall the Princely One's kindness.



The progress of Liu Bei, with the crowd of people in his train, was very slow.

“The pursuers will be upon us quickly,” said Zhuge Liang. “Let us send Guan Yu to Jiangxia for succor. Liu Qi should be told to bring soldiers and prepare boats for us at Jiangling.”

Liu Bei agreed to this and wrote a letter which he sent by the hands of Guan Yu and Sun Qian and five hundred troops. Zhang Fei was put in command of the rear guard. Zhao Yun was told to guard Liu Bei's family, while the others ordered the march of the people.

They only traveled three or four miles daily, and the halts were frequent.

Meanwhile, Cao Cao was at Fancheng, whence he sent troops over the river toward Xiangyang. He summoned Liu Cong, but Liu Cong was too afraid to answer the call. No persuasion could get him to go.

Wang Wei said to him privately, “Now you can overcome Cao Cao if you are wise. Since you have announced surrender and Liu Bei has gone away, Cao Cao will relax his precautions, and you can catch him unawares. Send a well-prepared but unexpected force to waylay him in some commanding position, and the thing is done. If you were to take Cao Cao prisoner, your fame would run throughout the empire, and the land would

be yours for the taking. This is a sort of opportunity that does not recur, and you should not miss it.”

The young man consulted Cai Mao, who called Wang Wei an evil counselor and spoke to him harshly.

“You are mad! You know nothing and understand nothing of destiny,” said Cai Mao.

Wang Wei angrily retorted, saying, “Cai Mao is the betrayer of the country, and I wish I could eat him alive!”

The quarrel waxed deadly, and Cai Mao wanted to slay Wang Wei. But eventually peace was restored by Kuai Yue.

Then, Cai Mao and Zhang Yun went to Fancheng to see Cao Cao.

Cai Mao was by instinct specious and flattering, and when his host asked concerning the resources of Jingzhou, he replied, “There are fifty thousand horse-riders, one hundred fifty thousand footsoldiers, and eighty thousand marines. Most of the money and grain are at Jiangling. The rest is stored at various places. There are ample supplies for a year.”

“How many war vessels are there? Who is in command?” said Cao Cao.

“The ships, of all sizes, number seven thousands, and we two are the commanders.”

Upon this, Cao Cao conferred upon Cai Mao the title of the Lord Who Controls the South, and Supreme Admiral of the Naval Force; Zhang Yun was his Vice-Admiral with the title of the Lord Who Brings Obedience.

When they went to thank Cao Cao for these honors, he told them, saying, “I am about to propose to the Throne that Liu Biao’s son should be perpetual Imperial Protector of Jingzhou in succession to his late father.”

With this promise for their young master and the honors for themselves, they retired.

Then, Xun You asked Cao Cao, “Why have these two evident self-seekers and flatterers been treated so generously?”

Cao Cao replied, “Do I not know all about them? Only, in the north, where we have been, we know very little of war by water, and these two men know much. I want their help for the present. When my end is achieved, I can do as I like with them.”

Liu Cong was highly delighted when his two chief supporters returned with the promise Cao Cao had given them. Soon after, he gave up his seal and military commission and proceeded to welcome Cao Cao, who received him very graciously.

Cao Cao next proceeded to camp near Xiangyang. The populace, led by Cai Mao and Zhang Yun, welcomed him with burning incense, and he on his part put forth proclamations couched in comforting terms.

Cao Cao presently entered the city and took his seat in the residence in state. Then, he summoned Kuai Yue and said to him graciously, “I do not rejoice so much at gaining Jingzhou as at meeting you, friend Kuai Yue.”

Cao Cao made Kuai Yue Governor of Jiangling and Lord of Fancheng; Wang Can, Fu Xuan, and Kuai Yue’s other adherents were all ennobled. Liu Cong became Imperial Protector of Qingzhou in the north and was ordered to proceed to his region forthwith.

Liu Cong was greatly frightened and said, “I have no wish to become an actual official. I wish to remain in the place where my father and mother live.”

Said Cao Cao, "Your protectorship is quite near the capital, and I have sent you there as a full official to remove you from the intrigues of this place."

In vain Liu Cong declined the honors thus thrust upon him: he was compelled to go, and he departed, taking his mother with him. Of his friends, only Wang Wei accompanied him. Some of his former officers escorted him as far as the river and then took their leave.

Then, Cao Cao called his trusty officer Yu Jin and said, "Follow Liu Cong and put him and his mother to death. Our worries are thus removed."

Yu Jin followed the small party.

When he drew near, he shouted, "I have an order from the great Prime Minister to put you both to death, mother and son! You may as well submit quietly."

Lady Cai threw her arms about her son, lifted up her voice and wept. Yu Jin bade his soldiers get on with their bloody work. Only Wang Wei made any attempt to save his mistress, and he was soon killed. The two, mother and son, were soon finished, and Yu Jin returned to report his success. He was richly rewarded.

Next, Cao Cao sent to discover and seize the family of Zhuge Liang, but they had already disappeared. Zhuge Liang had moved them to the Three Gorges. It was much to Cao Cao's disgust that the search was fruitless.

So Xiangyang was settled. Then, Xun You proposed a further advance. He said, "Jiangling is an important place, and very rich. If Liu Bei gets it, it will be difficult to dislodge him."

"How could I have overlooked that?" said Cao Cao.

Then he called upon the officers of Xiangyang for one who could lead the way. They all came except Wen Ping.

Cao Cao sent for him and soon he came also.

“Why are you late?” asked Cao Cao.

Wen Ping said, “To be a minister and see one’s master lose his own boundaries is most shameful. Such a person has no face to show to anyone else, and I was too ashamed to come.”

His tears fell fast as he finished this speech. Cao Cao admired his loyal conduct and rewarded him with office of Governorship of Jiangxia and a title of Lordship, and also bade him open the way.

The spies returned and said, “Liu Bei is hampered by the crowds of people who have followed him. He can proceed only three or four miles daily, and he is only one hundred miles away.”

Cao Cao decided to take advantage of Liu Bei’s plight, so he chose out five thousand tried horsemen and sent them after the cavalcade, giving them a limit of a day and a night to come up therewith. The main army would follow.

As has been said, Liu Bei was traveling with a huge multitude of followers, to guard whom he had taken what precautions were possible. Zhang Fei was in charge of the rear guard, and Zhao Yun was to protect his lord’s family. Guan Yu had been sent to Jiangxia.

One day, Zhuge Liang came in and said, “There is as yet no news from Jiangxia. There must be some difficulties.”

“I wish that you yourself would go there,” said Liu Bei. “Liu Qi would remember your former kindness to him and consent to anything you proposed.”

Zhuge Liang said he would go and set out with Liu Feng, the adopted son of Liu Bei, taking an escort of five hundred troops.

A few days after, while on the march in company with three of his commanders—Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, and Mi Fang—a sudden whirlwind rose just in front of Liu Bei, and a huge column of dust shot up into the air, hiding the face of the sun.

Liu Bei was frightened and asked, “What might that portend?”

Jian Yong, who knew something of the mysteries of nature, took the auspices by counting secretly on his fingers. Pale and trembling, he announced, “A calamity is threatening this very night. My lord must leave the people to their fate and flee quickly.”

“I cannot do that,” said Liu Bei.

“If you allow your pity to overcome your judgment, then misfortune is very near,” said Jian Yong.

Thus spoke Jian Yong to his lord, who then asked what place was near.

His people replied, “Dangyang is quite close, and there is a very famous mountain near it called Prospect Mountain.”

Then, Liu Bei bade them lead the way thither.

The season was late autumn, just changing to winter, and the icy wind penetrated to the very bones. As evening fell, long-drawn howls of misery were heard on every side. At the middle of the fourth watch, two hours after

midnight, they heard a rumbling sound in the northwest. Liu Bei halted and placed himself at the head of his own guard of two thousand soldiers to meet whatever might come.

Presently, Cao Cao's men appeared and made fierce onslaught. Defense was impossible, though Liu Bei fought desperately. By good fortune, just at the crisis, Zhang Fei came up, cut an alley through, rescued his Brother, and got him away to the east.

Presently, they were stopped by Wen Ping.

"Turncoat! Can you still look humans in the face?" cried Liu Bei.

Wen Ping was overwhelmed with shame and led his troops away. Zhang Fei, now fighting, protected his Brother till dawn.

By that time, Liu Bei had gotten beyond the sound of battle, and there was time to rest. Only a few of his followers had been able to keep near him. He knew nothing of the fate of his officers or the people.

He lifted up his voice in lamentation, saying, "Myriads of living souls are suffering from love of me, and my officers and my loved ones are lost. One would be a graven image not to weep at such loss!"

Still plunged in sadness, presently he saw hurrying toward him Mi Fang, with an enemy's arrow still sticking in his face.

Mi Fang exclaimed, "Zhao Yun has gone over to Cao Cao!"

Liu Bei angrily bade him be silent, crying, "Do you think I can believe that of my old friend?"

"Perhaps he has gone over," said Zhang Fei. "He must see that we are nearly lost and there are riches and honors on the other side."

"He has followed me faithfully through all my misfortunes. His heart is firm as a rock. No riches or honors would move him," said Liu Bei.

"I saw him go away northwest," said Mi Fang.

“Wait till I meet him,” said Zhang Fei. “If I run against him, I will kill him!”

“Beware how you doubt him,” said Liu Bei. “Have you forgotten the circumstances under which your Brother Guan Yu had to slay Cai Yang to ease your doubts of him? Zhao Yun’s absence is due to good reason wherever he has gone, and he would never abandon me.”

But Zhang Fei was not convinced. Then he, with a score of his men, rode to the Long Slope Bridge. Seeing a wood near the bridge, an idea suddenly struck him. He bade his followers cut branches from the trees, tie them to the tails of the horses, and ride to and fro so as to raise a great dust as though an army were concealed in the wood. He himself took up his station on the bridge facing the west with spear set ready for action. So he kept watch.

Now Zhao Yun, after fighting with the enemy from the fourth watch till daylight, could see no sign of his lord and, moreover, had lost his lord’s family.

He thought bitterly within himself, “My master confided to me his family and the Child Lord Liu Shan, and I have lost them. How can I look him in the face? I can only go now and fight to the death. Whatever may happen, I must go to seek the women and my lord’s son.”

Turning about, he found he had but some forty followers left. He rode quickly to and fro among the scattered soldiers seeking the lost women.

The lamentations of the people about him were enough to make heaven and earth weep. Some had been wounded by arrows, others by

spears; they had thrown away their children, abandoned their wives, and were flying they knew not whither in crowds.

Presently, Zhao Yun saw a man lying in the grass and recognized him as Jian Yong.

“Have you seen the two mothers?” cried he.

Jian Yong replied, “They left their carriage and ran away taking the Child Lord Liu Shan in their arms. I followed, but on the slope of the hill I was wounded and fell from my horse. The horse was stolen. I could fight no longer, and I lay down here.”

Zhao Yun put his colleague on the horse of one of his followers, told off two soldiers to support Jian Yong, and bade Jian Yong ride to their lord and tell him of the loss.

“Say,” said Zhao Yun, “that I will seek the lost ones in heaven or hell, through good or evil. And if I find them not, I will die in the battlefield.”

Then, Zhao Yun rode off toward the Long Slope Bridge.

As he went, a voice called out, “General Zhao Yun, where are you going?”

“Who are you?” said Zhao Yun, pulling up.

“One of the Princely One’s carriage guards. I am wounded.”

“Do you know anything of the two ladies?”

“Not very long ago, I saw Lady Gan go south with a party of other women. Her hair was down, and she was barefooted.”

Hearing this, without even another glance at the speaker, Zhao Yun put his horse at full gallop toward the south. Soon he saw a small crowd of people, male and female, walking hand in hand.

“Is Lady Gan among you!” he called out.

A woman in the rear of the party looked up at him and uttered a loud cry.

He slipped off his steed, stuck his spear in the sand, and wept, "It was my fault that you were lost. But where are Lady Mi and our Child Lord?"

Lady Gan replied, "She and I were forced to abandon our carriage and mingle with the crowd on foot. Then a band of soldiers came up, and we were separated. I do not know where they are. I ran for my life."

As she spoke, a howl of distress rose from the crowd of fugitives, for a thousand of soldiers appeared. Zhao Yun recovered his spear and mounted ready for action. Presently, he saw among the soldiers a prisoner bound upon a horse, and the prisoner was Mi Zhu. Behind Mi Zhu followed a general gripping a huge sword. The troops belonged to the army of Cao Ren, and the general was Chunyu Dao. Having captured Mi Zhu, he was just taking him to his chief as a proof of his prowess.

Zhao Yun shouted and rode at the captor, who was speedily slain by a spear thrust, and his captive was set free. Then taking two of the horses, Zhao Yun set Lady Gan on one and Mi Zhu took the other. They rode away toward Long Slope Bridge.

But there, standing grim on the bridge, was Zhang Fei. As soon as he saw Zhao Yun, he called out, "Zhao Yun, why have you betrayed our lord?"

"I fell behind because I was seeking the ladies and our Child Lord," said Zhao Yun. "What do you mean by talking of betrayal?"

"If it had not been that Jian Yong arrived before you and told me the story, I should hardly have spared you."

"Where is the master?" said Zhao Yun.

"Not far away, in front there," said Zhang Fei.

“Conduct Lady Gan to him. I am going to look for Lady Mi,” said Zhao Yun to his companion, and he turned back along the road by which he had come.

Before long, he met a leader armed with an iron spear and carrying a sword slung across his back, riding a curvetting steed, and leading ten other horsemen. Without uttering a word, Zhao Yun rode straight toward him and engaged. At the first pass, Zhao Yun disarmed his opponent and brought him to earth. His followers galloped away.

This fallen officer was no other than Xiahou En, Cao Cao’s sword-bearer. And the sword on Xiahou En’s back was his master’s. Cao Cao had two swords, one called “Trust of God” and the other “Blue Blade.” Trust of God was the weapon Cao Cao usually wore at his side, the other being carried by his sword-bearer. The Blue Blade would cut clean through iron as though it were mud, and no sword had so keen an edge.

Before Zhao Yun thus fell in with Xiahou En, the latter was simply plundering, depending upon the authority implied by his office. Least of all thought he of such sudden death as met him at Zhao Yun’s hands.

So Zhao Yun got possession of a famous sword. The name Blue Blade was chased in gold characters so that he recognized its value at once. He stuck it in his belt and again plunged into the press. Just as he did so, he turned his head and saw he had not a single follower left. He was quite alone.

Nevertheless, not for a single instant thought he of turning back: he was too intent upon his quest. To and fro, back and forth, he rode questioning this person and that.

At length, a man said, “A woman with a child in her arms, and wounded in the thigh so that she cannot walk, is lying over there through that hole in the wall.”

Zhao Yun rode to look, and there beside an old well behind the broken wall of a burned house, sat the mother, clasping the child to her breast and weeping.

Zhao Yun was on his knees before her in a moment.

“My child will live, then, since you are here,” cried Lady Mi. “Pity him, O General! Protect him, for he is the only son of his father’s flesh and blood. Take him to his father, and I can die content.”

“It is my fault that you have suffered,” replied Zhao Yun. “But it is useless to say more. I pray you take my horse, while I will walk beside and protect you till we get clear.”

She replied, “I may not do that. What would you do without a steed? But the boy here I confide to your care. I am badly wounded and cannot hope to live. Pray take him and go your way. Do not trouble more about me.”

“I hear shouting,” said Zhao Yun. “The soldiers will be upon us again in a moment. Pray mount quickly!”

“But really I cannot move,” she said. “Do not let there be a double loss!”

And she held out the child toward him as she spoke.

“Take the child!” cried Lady Mi. “His life and safety are in your hands.”

Again and again Zhao Yun besought her to get on his horse, but she would not.

The shouting drew nearer and nearer; Zhao Yun spoke harshly, saying, “If you will not do what I say, what will happen when the soldiers come up?”

She said no more. Throwing the child on the ground, she turned over and threw herself into the old well. And there she perished.



The warrior relies upon the strength of his charger,
Afoot, how could he bear to safety his young prince?
Brave mother! Who died to preserve the son of her
 husband's line;
Heroine was she, bold and decisive!



Seeing that Lady Mi had resolved the question by dying, there was nothing more to be done. Zhao Yun pushed over the wall to fill the well, and thus making a grave for the lady. Then he loosened his armor, let down the heart-protecting mirror, and placed the child in his breast. This done, he slung his spear and remounted.

Zhao Yun had gone but a short distance when he saw a horde of enemy led by Yan Ming, one of Cao Hong's generals. This warrior used a double-edged, three-pointed weapon, and he offered battle. However, Zhao Yun disposed of him after a very few bouts and dispersed his troops.

As the road cleared before him, Zhao Yun saw another detachment barring his way. At the head of this was a general exalted enough to display a banner with his name: Zhang He of Hejian. Zhao Yun never waited to parley but attacked. However, this was a more formidable antagonist, and half a score of bouts found neither any nearer defeat. But Zhao Yun, with the child in his bosom, could only fight with the greatest caution, and so he decided to flee.

Zhang He pursued, and as Zhao Yun thought only of thrashing his steed to get away, and little of the road, suddenly he went crashing into a pit. On came his pursuer, spear at poise. Suddenly, a brilliant flash of light seemed to shoot out of the pit, and the fallen horse leapt with it into the air and was again on firm earth.



A bright glory surrounds the child of the imperial line,
now in danger;
The powerful charger forces his way through the press
of battle,
Bearing to safety he who was destined to the throne
two score years and two;
And the general thus manifested his godlike courage.



This apparition frightened Zhang He, who abandoned the pursuit forthwith, and Zhao Yun rode off.

Presently, he heard shouts behind, “Zhao Yun, Zhao Yun, stop!” and at the same time, he saw ahead of him two generals who seemed disposed to dispute his way.

Ma Yan and Zhang Zi following and Jiao Chu and Zhang Neng in front, his state seemed desperate, but Zhao Yun quailed not.

As the men of Cao Cao came pressing on, Zhao Yun drew Cao Cao’s own sword to beat them off. Nothing could resist the Blue Blade sword. Armor, clothing, it went through without effort, and blood gushed forth in

fountains wherever it struck. So the four generals were soon beaten off, and Zhao Yun was once again free.

Now Cao Cao from a hilltop of the Prospect Mountain saw these deeds of derring-do and a general showing such valor that none could withstand him, so Cao Cao asked of his followers whether any knew the man. No one recognized him.

So Cao Hong galloped down into the plain and shouted out, “We should hear the name of the warrior!”

“I am Zhao Yun of Changshan!” replied Zhao Yun.

Cao Hong returned and told his lord, who said, “A very tiger of a leader! I must get him alive.”

Whereupon, he sent horsemen to all detachments with orders that no arrows were to be fired from an ambush at any point Zhao Yun should pass: he was to be taken alive.

And so Zhao Yun escaped most imminent danger, and Liu Shan’s safety, bound up with his savior’s, was also secured. On this career of slaughter which ended in safety, Zhao Yun, bearing in his bosom the Child Lord Liu Shan, cut down two main banners, took three spears, and slew or wounded of Cao Cao’s generals half a hundred, all men of renown.



Blood dyed the fighting robe and crimsoned his buff
coat;

None dared engage the terrible warrior at Dangyang;

In the days of old lived the brave Zhao Yun,
Who fought in the battlefield for his lord in danger.



Having thus fought his way out of the press, Zhao Yun lost no time in getting away from the battlefield. His white battle robe had turned red, soaking in blood.

On his way, near the rise of the hills, he met with two other bodies of troops under two brothers, Zhong Jin and Zhong Shen. One of these was armed with a massive ax, the other a halberd.

As soon as they saw Zhao Yun, they knew him and shouted, “Quickly dismount and be bound!”



He has only escaped from the tiger cave,
To risk the dragon pool’s sounding wave.

How Zhao Yun escaped will be next related.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act X

CHAPTER 42

SCREAMING, ZHANG FEI TRIUMPHS AT LONG SLOPE BRIDGE; DEFEATED,
LIU BEI MARCHES TO HANJIN.

As related in the last chapter, two generals appeared in front of Zhao Yun, who rode at them with his spear ready for a thrust. Zhong Jin was leading, flourishing his battleax. Zhao Yun engaged and very soon unhorsed him. Then, Zhao Yun galloped away.

Zhong Shen rode up behind ready with his halberd, and his horse's nose got so close to the other's tail that Zhao Yun could see in his armor the reflection of the play of Zhong Shen's weapon. Then suddenly, and without warning, Zhao Yun wheeled round his horse so that he faced his pursuer, and their two steeds struck breast to breast. With his spear in his left hand, Zhao Yun warded off the halberd strokes, and in his right, he swung the Blue Blade sword. One slash, and he had cut through both helmet and head. Zhong Shen fell to the ground, a corpse with only half a head on his body. His followers fled, and Zhao Yun retook the road toward Long Slope Bridge.

But in his rear arose another tumultuous shouting, seeming to rend the very sky, and Wen Ping came up behind. However, although the man was weary and his steed spent, Zhao Yun got close to the bridge, where he saw standing, all ready for any fray, Zhang Fei.

"Help me, Zhang Fei!" he cried, and crossed the bridge.

"Hasten!" cried Zhang Fei, "I will keep back the pursuers!"

About seven miles from the bridge, Zhao Yun saw Liu Bei with his followers reposing in the shade of some trees. He dismounted and drew near, weeping. The tears also started to Liu Bei's eyes when he saw his commander.

Still panting from his exertions, Zhao Yun gasped out, "My fault—death is too light a punishment. Lady Mi was severely wounded. She refused my horse and threw herself into a well. She is dead, and all I could do was to fill in the well with the rubbish that lay around. But I placed the babe in the breast of my fighting robe and have won my way out of the press of battle. Thanks to the little lord's grand luck, I have escaped. At first he cried a good deal, but for some time now he has not stirred or made a sound. I fear I may not have saved his life after all."

Then Zhao Yun opened his robe and looked: the child was fast asleep.

"Happily, Sir, your son is unhurt," said Zhao Yun as he drew him forth and presented him in both hands.

Liu Bei took the child but threw it aside angrily, saying, "To preserve that suckling, I very nearly lost a great general!"

Zhao Yun picked up the child again and, weeping, said, "Were I ground to powder, I could not prove my gratitude."



From out Cao Cao's host a tiger rushed,
His wish but to destroy;
Though Liu Bei's consort lost her life,
Zhao Yun preserved her boy.
"Too great the risk you ran to save
This child," the father cried.

To show he rated Zhao Yun high,
He threw his son aside.

Wen Ping and his company pursued Zhao Yun till they saw Zhang Fei's bristling mustache and fiercely-glaring eyes before them. There he was: seated on his battle steed, his hand grasping his terrible Serpent spear, guarding the bridge. They also saw great clouds of dust rising above the trees and concluded they would fall into an ambush if they ventured across the bridge. So they stopped the pursuit, not daring to advance further.

In a little time, Cao Ren, Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Li Dian, Yue Jin, Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Zhang He, and other generals of Cao Cao came up, but none dared advance, frightened not only by Zhang Fei's fierce look, but lest they should become victims of a ruse of Zhuge Liang. As they came up, they formed a line on the west side, halting till they could inform their lord of the position.

As soon as the messengers arrived and Cao Cao heard about it, he mounted and rode to the bridge to see for himself. Zhang Fei's fierce eye, scanning the hinder position of the army opposite him, saw the silken umbrella, the axes and banners coming along, and concluded that Cao Cao came to see for himself how matters stood.

So in a mighty voice, he shouted: "I am Zhang Fei of Yan. Who dares fight with me?"

At the sound of this thunderous voice, a terrible, quaking fear seized upon Cao Cao, and he bade them take the umbrella away.

Turning to his followers, he said, "Guan Yu had said that his Brother Zhang Fei was the sort of man to go through an army of a hundred legions

and take the head of its commander-in-chief, and do it easily. Now here is this terror in front of us, and we must be careful.”

As he finished speaking, again that terrible voice was heard: “I am Zhang Fei of Yan. Who dares fight with me?”

Cao Cao, seeing his enemy so fierce and resolute, was too frightened to think of anything but retreat.

Zhang Fei, seeing a movement going on in the rear, once again shook his spear and roared, “What mean you? You will not fight nor do you run away!”

This roar had scarcely begun when one of Cao Cao’s staff, Xiahou Jie, reeled and fell from his horse terror-stricken, paralyzed with fear. The panic touched Cao Cao and spread to his whole surroundings, and he and his staff galloped for their lives. They were as frightened as a suckling babe at a clap of thunder or a weak woodcutter at the roar of a tiger. Many threw away their spears, dropped their casques and fled, a wave of panic-stricken humanity, a tumbling mass of terrified horses. None thought of ought but flight, and those who ran trampled the bodies of fallen comrades under foot.



Zhang Fei was wrathful; and who dared
To accept his challenge? Fierce he glared;
His thunderous voice rolled out, and then
In terror fled Cao Cao’s armed soldiers.



Panic-stricken, Cao Cao galloped westward with the rest, thinking of nothing but getting away. He lost his headdress, and his loosened hair

streamed behind him. Presently, Zhang Liao and Xu Chu came up with him and seized his bridle; fear had deprived him of all self-control.

“Do not be frightened,” said Zhang Liao. “After all, Zhang Fei is but one man and not worthy of extravagant fear. If you will only return and attack, you will capture your enemy.”

That time, Cao Cao had somewhat overcome his panic and become reasonable. Two generals were ordered back to the bridge to reconnoiter.

Zhang Fei saw the disorderly rout of the enemy but he dared not pursue. However, he bade his score or so of dust-raising followers to cut loose the branches from their horses' tails and come to help destroy the bridge. This done, he went to report to his Brother and told him of the destruction of the bridge.

“Brave as you are, Brother, and no one is braver, but you are no strategist,” said Liu Bei.

“What mean you, Brother?”

“Cao Cao is very deep. You are no match for him. The destruction of the bridge will bring him in pursuit.”

“If he ran away at a yell of mine, think you he will dare return?”

“If you had left the bridge, he would have thought there was an ambush and would not have dared to pass it. Now, the destruction of the bridge tells him we are weak and fearful, and he will pursue. He does not mind a broken bridge. His legions could fill up the biggest rivers that we could get across.”

So orders were given to march, and they went by a byroad which led diagonally to Hanjin by the road of Minyang.

The two generals sent by Cao Cao to reconnoiter near Long Slope Bridge returned, saying, "The bridge has been destroyed. Zhang Fei has left."

"Then he is afraid," said Cao Cao.

Cao Cao at once gave orders to set ten thousand men at work on three floating bridges to be finished that night.

Li Dian said, "I fear this is one of the wiles of Zhuge Liang. So be careful."

"Zhang Fei is just a bold warrior, but there is no guile about him," said Cao Cao.

He gave orders for immediate advance.

Liu Bei was making all speed to Hanjin. Suddenly, there appeared in his track a great cloud of dust whence came loud rolls of drums and shouting.

Liu Bei was dismayed and said, "Before us rolls the Great River; behind is the pursuer. What hope is there for us?"

But he bade Zhao Yun organize a defense.

Now Cao Cao, in an order to his army, had said, "Liu Bei is a fish in the fish kettle, a tiger in the pit. Catch him this time, or the fish will get back to the sea and the tiger escape to the mountains. Therefore, every general must use his best efforts to press on."

In consequence, every leader bade those under him hasten forward. And they were pressing on at great speed, when suddenly a body of soldiers appeared from the hills and a voice cried, "I have waited here a long time!"

The leader who had shouted this bore in his hand the Green-Dragon Saber and rode Red Hare, for indeed it was no other than Guan Yu. He had gone to Jiangxia for help and had returned with a whole legion of ten thousand. Having heard of the battle, he had taken this very road to intercept pursuit.

As soon as Guan Yu appeared, Cao Cao stopped and said to his officers, "Here we are, tricked again by that Zhuge Liang!"

Without more ado, he ordered a retreat. Guan Yu followed him some three miles and then drew off to act as guard to his elder Brother on his way to the river. There, boats were ready, and Liu Bei and family went on board. When all were settled comfortably in the boat, Guan Yu asked where was his Sister, the second wife of his Brother, Lady Mi. Then Liu Bei told him the story of Dangyang.

"Alas!" said Guan Yu. "Had you taken my advice that day of the hunting in Xutian, we should have escaped the misery of this day."

"But," said Liu Bei, "on that day it was 'Ware damaged when pelting rats.'"

Just as Liu Bei spoke, he heard war drums on the south bank. A fleet of boats, thick as a flight of ants, came running up with swelling sails before the fair wind. He was alarmed.

The boats came nearer. There Liu Bei saw the white clad figure of a man wearing a silver helmet who stood in the prow of the foremost ship.

The leader cried, "Are you all right, my uncle? I am very guilty." It was Liu Qi. He bowed low as the ship passed, saying, "I heard you were in

danger from Cao Cao, and I have come to aid you.”

Liu Bei welcomed Liu Qi with joy, whose soldiers joined in with the main body, and the whole fleet sailed on, while they told each other their adventures.

Unexpectedly in the southwest, there appeared a line of fighting ships swishing up before a fair wind.

Liu Qi said, “All my troops are here, and now there is an enemy barring the way. If they are not Cao Cao’s ships, they must be from the South Land. We have a poor chance. What now?”

Liu Bei went to the prow and gazed at them. Presently he made out a figure in a turban and Daoist robe sitting in the bows of one of the boats and knew it to be Zhuge Liang. Behind him stood Sun Qian.

When they were quite near, Liu Bei asked Zhuge Liang how he came to be there.

And Zhuge Liang reported what he had done, saying, “When I reached Jiangxia, I sent Guan Yu to land at Hanjin with reinforcements, for I feared pursuit from Cao Cao and knew that road you would take instead of Jiangling. So I prayed your nephew to go to meet you, while I went to Xiakou to muster as many soldiers as possible.”

The newcomers added to their strength, and they began once more to consider how their powerful enemy might be overcome.

Said Zhuge Liang, “Xiakou is strong and a good strategic point. It is also rich and suited for a lengthy stay. I would ask you, my lord, to make it a permanent camp. Your nephew can go to Jiangxia to get the fleet in order

and prepare weapons. Thus we can create two threatening angles for our position. If we all return to Jiangxia, the position will be weakened.”

Liu Qi replied, “The Directing Instructor’s words are excellent, but I wish rather my uncle stayed awhile in Jiangxia till the army was in thorough order. Then he could go to Xiakou.”

“You speak to the point, nephew,” replied Liu Bei.

Then, leaving Guan Yu with five thousand troops at Xiakou, he, with Zhuge Liang and his nephew, went to Jiangxia.

When Cao Cao saw Guan Yu with a force ready to attack, he feared lest a greater number were hidden away behind, so he stopped the pursuit. He also feared lest Liu Bei should take Jiangling, so he marched thither with all haste.

The two officers in command at Jingzhou City, Deng Yi and Liu Xin, had heard of the death of their lord Liu Cong at Xiangyang and, knowing that there was no chance of successful defense against Cao Cao’s armies, they led out the people of Jingzhou to the outskirts and offered submission.

Cao Cao entered the city and, after restoring order and confidence, he released Han Song and gave him the dignified office of Director of Ambassadorial Receptions. He rewarded the others.

Then said Cao Cao, “Liu Bei has gone to Jiangxia and may ally himself with the South Land, and the opposition to me will be greater. Can he be destroyed?”

Xun You said, “The splendor of your achievements has spread wide. Therefore, you might send a messenger to invite Sun Quan to a grand hunting party at Jiangxia, and you two could seize Liu Bei, share Jingzhou

with Sun Quan, and make a solemn treaty. Sun Quan will be too frightened not to come over to you, and your end will be gained.”

Cao Cao agreed. He sent the letters by a messenger, and he prepared his army—horse and foot and marines. He had in all eight hundred thirty thousand troops, but he called them a million. The attack was to be by land and water at the same time.

The fleet advanced up the river in two lines. On the west it extended to Jingxia, on the east to Qichun. The stockades stretched one hundred miles.

The story of Cao Cao’s movements and successes reached Sun Quan, then in camp at Chaisang. He assembled his strategists to decide on a scheme of defense.

Lu Su said, “Jingzhou is contiguous to our borders. It is strong and defensive; its people are rich. It is the sort of country that an emperor or a king should have. Liu Biao’s recent death gives an excuse for me to be sent to convey condolences, and once there, I shall be able to talk over Liu Bei and the officers of the late Imperial Protector to combine with you against Cao Cao. If Liu Bei does as I wish, then success is yours.”

Sun Quan thought this a good plan, so he had the necessary letters prepared, and the gifts, and sent Lu Su with them.

All this time, Liu Bei was at Jiangxia, where, with Zhuge Liang and Liu Qi, he was endeavoring to evolve a good plan of campaign.

Zhuge Liang said, "Cao Cao's power is too great for us to cope with. Let us go over to the South Land and ask help from Sun Quan. If we can set north and south at grips, we ought to be able to get some advantage from our intermediate position between them."

"But will they be willing to have anything to do with us?" said Liu Bei. "The South Land is a large and populous country, and Sun Quan has ambitions of his own."

Zhuge Liang replied, "Cao Cao, with his army of a million, holds the Han River and a half of the Great River. The South Land will certainly send to find out all possible about the position. Should any messenger come, I shall borrow a little boat and make a little trip over the river and trust to my little lithe tongue to set north and south at each other's throats. If the south wins, we will assist in destroying Cao Cao in order to get Jingzhou. If the north wins, we shall profit by the victory to get the South Land. So we shall get some advantage either way."

"That is a very fine view to take," said Liu Bei. "But how are you going to get hold of anyone from the South Land to talk to?"

Liu Bei's question was answered by the arrival of Lu Su, and as the ship touched the bank and the envoy came ashore, Zhuge Liang laughed, saying, "It is done!" Turning to Liu Qi, he asked, "When Sun Ce died, did your country send any condolences?"

"It is impossible there would be any mourning courtesies between them and us. We had caused the death of his father, Sun Jian."

"Then it is certain that this envoy does not come to present condolences but to spy out the land." So he said to Liu Bei, "When Lu Su asks about the movements of Cao Cao, you will know nothing. If he presses the matter, say he can ask me."

Having thus prepared their scheme, they sent to welcome the envoy, who entered the city in mourning garb. The gifts having been accepted, Liu Qi asked Lu Su to meet Liu Bei. When the introductory ceremonies were over, the three men went to one of the inner chambers to drink a cup of wine.

Presently, Lu Su said to Liu Bei, "By reputation I have known you a long time, Uncle Liu Bei, but till today I have not met you. I am very gratified at seeing you. You have been fighting Cao Cao, though, lately, so I suppose you know all about him. Has he really so great an army? How many, do you think, he has?"

"My army was so small that we fled whenever we heard of his approach. So I do not know how many he had."

"You had the advice of Zhuge Liang, and you used fire on Cao Cao twice. You burned him almost to death so that you can hardly say you know nothing about his soldiers," said Lu Su.

"Without asking my adviser, I really do not know the details."

"Where is Zhuge Liang? I should like to see him," said Lu Su.

So they sent for him, and he was introduced.

When the ceremonies were over, Lu Su said, "I have long admired your genius but have never been fortunate enough to meet you. Now that I have met you, I hope I may speak of present politics."

Replied Zhuge Liang, "I know all Cao Cao's infamies and wickednesses, but to my regret, we were not strong enough to withstand him. That is why we avoided him."

"Is the Imperial Uncle going to stay here?"

"The Princely One is an old friend of Wu Ju, Governor of Changwu, and intends to go to him."

“Wu Ju has few troops and insufficient supplies. He cannot ensure safety for himself. How can he receive the Uncle?” said Lu Su.

“Changwu is not one to remain in long, but it is good enough for the present. We can make other plans for the future.”

Lu Su said, “Sun Quan is strongly posted in the six southern territories and is exceedingly well-supplied. He treats able people and scholars with the greatest courtesy, and so they gather round him. Now, if you are seeking a plan for your Prince, you cannot do better than send some friend to confer with him.”

“There have never been any relations between my master and yours,” said Zhuge Liang. “I fear there would be nothing but a waste of words. Besides, we have no one to send.”

“Your elder brother, Zhuge Jin, is there as adviser and is longing to see you. I am but a simple wight, but I should be pleased to discuss affairs with my master and you.”

“But Zhuge Liang is my Directing Instructor,” said Liu Bei, “and I cannot do without him. He cannot go.”

Lu Su pressed him. Liu Bei pretended to refuse permission.

“It is important. I pray you give me leave to go,” said Zhuge Liang.

Then Liu Bei consented. And they soon took leave, and the two set out by boat for Sun Quan’s headquarters.

A little boat sailed down the stream
With Zhuge Liang well content;
For he could see his enemies

To fiery perdition sent.

The result of this journey will appear in the following chapter.



END OF ACT X

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XI:

FIRE ON THE WATERS:

THE BATTLE OF RED CLIFFS

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XI

CHAPTER 43

ZHUGE LIANG DISPUTES WITH THE SOUTHERN SCHOLARS; LU SU
DENOUNCES THE MAJORITY OPINION.

In the boat on the way to Chaisang, the two travelers beguiled the time by discussing affairs.

Lu Su impressed upon his companion, saying, "When you see my master, do not reveal the truth about the magnitude of Cao Cao's army."

"You do not have to remind me," replied Zhuge Liang, "but I shall know how to reply."

When the boat arrived, Zhuge Liang was lodged in the guests' quarters, and Lu Su went alone to see his master. Lu Su found Sun Quan actually at a council, assembled to consider the situation. Lu Su was summoned thereto and questioned at once upon what he had discovered.

"I know the general outline, but I want a little time to prepare my report," replied Lu Su.

Then, Sun Quan produced Cao Cao's letter and gave it to Lu Su. "That came yesterday. I have sent the bearer of it back, and this gathering is to consider the reply," said he.

Lu Su read the letter:

"When I, the Prime Minister, received the imperial command to punish a fault, my banners went south and Liu Cong became my prisoner, while the people of Jingzhou flocked to my side at the first rumor of my coming. Under my hand are one million strong and a

thousand able leaders. My desire is, General, that we go on a great hunting expedition into Jiangxia and together attack Liu Bei. We will share his land between us, and we will swear perpetual amity. If happily you would not be a mere looker-on, I pray you reply quickly."

"What have you decided upon, my lord?" asked Lu Su as he finished the letter.

"I have not yet decided."

Then, Zhang Zhao said, "It would be imprudent to withstand Cao Cao's hundred legions backed by the imperial authority. Moreover, your most important defense against him is the Great River, but since Cao Cao has gained possession of Jingzhou, the river is his ally against us. We cannot withstand him, and the only way to tranquility, in my opinion, is submission."

"The words of the speaker accord with the manifest decree of providence," echoed all the assembly.

Sun Quan remaining silent and thoughtful.

Zhang Zhao again took up the argument, saying, "Do not hesitate, my lord. Submission to Cao Cao means tranquility to the people of the South Land and safety for the inhabitants of the six territories."

Sun Quan still remained silent. His head bent in deep thought. Presently, he arose and paced slowly out at the door, and Lu Su followed him.

Outside, he took Lu Su by the hand, saying, "What do you desire?"

"What they have all been saying is very derogatory to you. A common person might submit. You cannot."

"Why? How do you explain that?"

“If people like us servants submitted, we would just return to our village or continue holding our offices, and everything would go on as before. If you submit, whither will you go? You will be created a lord of some humble fief, perhaps. You will have one carriage, no more; one saddle horse: that is all. Your retinue will be some ten. Will you be able to sit facing the south and call yourself by the kingly title of ‘The Solitary?’ Each one in that crowd of hangers-on is thinking for himself, is purely selfish, and you should not listen to them, but take a line of your own and that quickly. Determine to play a bold game!”

Sun Quan sighed, “They all talk and talk; they miss my point of view. Now you have just spoken of a bold game, and your view is the same as mine. Surely, the gods have expressly sent you to me. Still, Cao Cao is now the stronger by all Yuan Shao’s and Liu Biao’s armies, and he has possession of Jingzhou. I fear he is almost too powerful to contend with.”

“I have brought back with me Zhuge Liang, the younger brother of our Zhuge Jin. If you questioned him, he would explain clearly.”

“Is Master Sleeping Dragon really here?”

“Really here, in the guesthouse.”

“It is too late to see him today. But tomorrow, I will assemble my officials, and you will introduce him to all my best. After that we will debate the matter.”

With these instructions, Lu Su retired.

Next day, he went to the guesthouse and conveyed Sun Quan’s commands to the guest, particularly saying, “When you see my master, say nothing of the magnitude of Cao Cao’s army.”

Zhuce Liang smiled, saying, “I shall act as circumstances dictate. You may be sure I shall make no mistakes.”

Zhuge Liang was then conducted to where the high officers, civil and military to the number of forty and more, were assembled. They formed a dignified conclave as they sat in stately ranks with their tall headdresses and broad girdles.

Zhang Zhao sat at the head, and Zhuge Liang first saluted him. Then, one by one, he exchange the formal courtesies with them all. This done, he took his seat in the guest's chair.

They, on their part, noted with interest Zhuge Liang's refined and elegant manner and his commanding figure, thinking within themselves, "Here is a persuader fitted for discourse."

Zhang Zhao led the way in trying to bait the visitor. He said, "You will pardon the most insignificant of our official circle, myself, if I mention that people say you compare yourself with those two famous men of talent, Guan Zhong and Yue Yi. Is there any truth in this?"

"To a trifling extent I have compared myself with them," replied Zhuge Liang.

"I have heard that Liu Bei made three journeys to visit you when you lived in retirement in your simple dwelling in the Sleeping Dragon Ridge, and that when you consented to serve him, he said he was as lucky as a fish in getting home to the ocean. Then, he desired to possess the region about Jingzhou. Yet today all that country belongs to Cao Cao. I should like to hear your account of all that."

Zhuge Liang thought, *This Zhang Zhao is Sun Quan's first adviser. Unless I can nonplus him, I shall never have a chance with his master.*

So he replied, "In my opinion, the taking of the region around the Han River was as simple as turning over one's hand. But my master, Liu Bei, is both righteous and humane and would not stoop to filching the possession

of a member of his own house. So he refused the offer of succession. But Liu Cong a stupid lad, misled by specious words, submitted to Cao Cao and fell victim to his ferocity. My master is in camp at Jiangxia, but what his future plans may be cannot be divulged at present.”

Zhang Zhao said, “Be it so, but your words and your deeds are something discordant. You say you are the equal of the two famous ones. Well, Guan Zhong, as minister of Prince Huan, put his master at the very head of the feudal nobles, making his master’s will supreme in all the land. Under the able statesmanship of Yue Yi, the feeble state of Yan conquered Qi, reducing nearly seventy of its cities. These two were men of most commanding and conspicuous talent.

“When you lived in retirement, you smiled scornfully at ordinary people, passed your days in idleness, nursing your knees and posing in a superior manner, implying that if you had control of affairs, Liu Bei would be more than human; he would bring good to everybody and remove all evil; rebellion and robbery would be no more. Poor Liu Bei, before he obtained your help, was an outcast and a vagabond, stealing a city here and there where he could. With you to help him, he was to become the cynosure of every eye, and every lisping school child was to say that he was a tiger who had grown wings; the Hans were to be restored and Cao Cao and his faction exterminated; the good old days would be restored, and all the people who had been driven into retirement by the corruption of political life would wake up, rub the sleep out of their eyes, and be in readiness to lift the cloud of darkness that covered the sky and gaze up at the glorious brilliancy of the sun and moon, to pull the people out of fire and water and put all the world to rest on a couch of comfort. That was all supposed to happen forthwith.

“Why then, when you went to Xinye, did not Cao Cao’s army throw aside their arms and armors and flee like rats? Why could you not have told Liu Biao how to give tranquility to his people? Why could you not aid his orphan son to protect his frontiers? Instead, you abandoned Xinye and fled to Fancheng; you were defeated at Dangyang and fled to Xiakou with no place to rest in. Thus, after you had joined Liu Bei, he was worse off than before. Was it thus with Guan Zhong and Yue Yi? I trust you do not mind my blunt speech.”

Zhuge Liang waited till Zhang Zhao had closed his oration, then laughed and said, “How can the common birds understand the long flight of the cranes? Let me use an illustration. A man has fallen into a terrible malady. First the physician must administer hashish, then soothing drugs until his viscera shall be calmed into harmonious action. When the sick man’s body shall have been reduced to quietude, then may he be given strong meats to strengthen him and powerful drugs to correct the disorder. Thus the disease will be quite expelled and the man restored to health. If the physician does not wait till the humors and pulse are in harmony but throws in his strong drugs too early, it will be difficult to restore the patient.

“My master suffered defeat at Runan and went to Liu Biao. He had then less than one thousand soldiers and only three generals—Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun. That was indeed a time of extreme weakness. Xinye was a secluded, rustic town with few inhabitants and scanty supplies, and my master only retired there as a temporary refuge. How could he even think of occupying and holding it? Yet, with insufficient force, in a weak city, with untrained men and inadequate supplies, we burned Xiahou Dun at Bowang Slope, drowned Cao Ren and Cao Hong and their army in the White River, and set them in terror as they fled. I doubt whether the two ancient heroes would have done any better. As to the surrender of Liu Cong

Liu Bei knew nothing of it. And he was too noble and too righteous to take advantage of a kinsman's straits to seize his inheritance. As for the defeat at Dangyang, it must be remembered that Liu Bei was hampered with a huge voluntary following of common-people, with their aged relatives and their children, whom he was too humane to abandon. He never thought of taking Jiangling, but willingly suffered with his people. This is a striking instance of his magnanimity.

“Small forces are no match for large armies. Victory and defeat are common episodes in every campaign. The great Founder of the Hans suffered many defeats at the hands of Xiang Yu, but Liu Bang finally conquered at Gaixia, and that battle was decisive. Was not this due to the strategy of Han Xin who, though he had long served Liu Bang, had never won a victory? Indeed, real statesmanship and the restoration of stable government is a master plan far removed from the vapid discourses and debates of a lot of bragging babblers and specious and deceitful talkers, who, as they themselves say, are immeasurably superior to the rest of humankind but who, when it comes to deeds and decisions to meet the infinite and constant vicissitudes of affairs, fail to throw up a single capable person. Truly, such people are the laughing stock of all the world.”

Zhang Zhao found no reply to this diatribe.

But another in the assembly lifted up his voice, saying, “But what of Cao Cao's present position? There he is, encamped with one hundred legions and a thousand leaders. Whither he goes he is invincible as wriggling dragon, and whither he looks he is as fearsome as roaring tiger. He seems to have taken Jiangxia already, as we see.” The speaker was Yu Fan.

And Zhuge Liang replied, “Cao Cao has acquired the swarms of Yuan Shao and stolen the crowds of Liu Biao. Yet I care not for all his mob

legions.”

Yu Fan smiled icily, saying, “When you got thrashed at Dangyang and in desperation sent this way and that to ask help, even then did you not care? But do you think big talk really takes people in?”

Zhuge Liang replied, “Liu Bei had a few thousand scrupulous soldiers to oppose against a million fierce brutes. He retired to Xiakou for breathing space. The South Land have strong and good soldiers, and there are ample supplies, and the Great River is a defense. Is now a time for you to convince your lord to bend the knee before a renegade, to be careless of his honor and reputation? As a fact, Liu Bei is not the sort of man to fear such a rebel as Cao Cao.”

Yu Fan had nothing to reply.

Next, Bu Zhi, who was among those seated, said, “Will you talk of our southern land with a tongue like the tongues of the persuaders Zhang Yi and Su Qin in the ancient time?”

Zhuge Liang replied, “You regard those two as mere speculative talkers; you do not recognize them also as heroes. Su Qin bore the Prime Ministers’ seals of six federated states; Zhang Yi was twice Prime Minister of the state of Qin. Both were men of conspicuous ability who brought about the reformation of their governments. They are not to be compared with those who quail before the strong and overbear the weak, who fear the dagger and run away from the sword. You, Sir, have listened to Cao Cao’s crafty and empty threat, and it has frightened you into advising surrender. Dare you ridicule Su Qin and Zhang Yi?”

Bu Zhi was silenced.

Then, suddenly another interjected the question, “What do you think of Cao Cao?”

It was Xue Zong who had spoken.

And Zhuge Liang replied, "Cao Cao is one of the rebels against the dynasty. Why ask about him?"

"You are mistaken," said Xue Zong. "The Hans have outlasted their allotted time, and the end is near. Cao Cao already has two-thirds of the empire, and people are turning to him. Your master has not recognized the fateful moment, and to contend with a man so strong is to try to smash stones with eggs. Failure is certain."

Zhuce Liang angrily replied, "Why do you speak so undutiful words, as if you knew neither father nor prince? Loyalty and filial duty are the essentials of a person's being. For a minister of Han, correct conduct demands that one is pledged to the destruction of anyone who does not follow the canon of a minister's duty. Cao Cao's forebears enjoyed the bounty of Han, but instead of showing gratitude, he nourishes in his bosom thoughts of rebellion. The whole world is incensed against him, and yet you would claim for him the indication of destiny. Truly, you are a man who knows neither father nor prince, a man unworthy of any words, and I decline to argue with you further."

The blush of shame overspread Xue Zong's face, and he said no more.

But another, Lu Ji, took up the dispute and said, "Although Cao Cao overawes the Emperor and in his name coerces the nobles, yet he is the descendant of the Supreme Ancestor's Prime Minister Cao Shen; while your master, though he says he is descended from a prince, has no proof thereof. In the eyes of the world, Liu Bei is just a weaver of mats, a seller of straw shoes. Who is he to strive with Cao Cao?"

Zhuce Liang laughed and replied, "Are you not that Lu Ji who pocketed the orange when you were sitting among Yuan Shu's guests? Listen to me: I have a word to say to you. Inasmuch as Cao Cao is a

descendant of a minister of state, he is by heredity a servant of the Hans. But now he has monopolized all state authority and knows only his own arbitrary will, heaping every indignity upon his lord. Not only does he forget his prince, but he ignores his ancestors; not only is he a rebellious servant of Han, but the renegade of his family. Liu Bei of Yuzhou is a noble scion of the imperial family upon whom the Emperor has conferred rank, as is recorded in the annals. How, then, can you say there is no evidence of his imperial origin? Beside, the very founder of the dynasty was himself of lowly origin, and yet he became emperor. Where is the shame in weaving mats and selling shoes? Your mean, immature views are unfit to be mentioned in the presence of scholars of standing.”

This put a stop to Lu Ji’s flow of eloquence.

But another of those present said, “Zhuge Liang’s words are overbearing, and he distorts reason. It is not proper argument, and he had better say no more. But I would ask him what classical canon he studied.”

Zhuce Liang looked at his interlocutor, who was Yan Jun, and said, “The dryasdusts of every age select passages and choose phrases. What else are they good for? Do they ever initiate a policy or manage an affair? Yi Yin, who was a farmer in the state of Shen, and Lu Wang, the fisherman of the River Wei; Zhang Liang and Chen Ping; Zheng Yu and Geng Yan—all were men of transcendent ability, but I have never inquired what classical canon they followed or on whose essays they formed their style. Would you liken them to your rusty students of books, whose journeyings are comprised between their brush and their inkstone, who spend their days in literary futilities, wasting both time and ink?”

No reply was forthcoming. Yan Jun hung his head with shame.

But another disputant, Cheng Deshu by name, suddenly shouted, “You are mightily fond of big words, Sir, but they do not give any proof of your

scholarship after all. I am inclined to think that a real scholar would just laugh at you.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “There is the noble scholar, loyal and patriotic, of perfect rectitude and a hater of any crookedness. The concern of such a scholar is to act in full sympathy with his day and leave to future ages a fine reputation.

There is the scholar of the mean type, a pedant and nothing more. He labors constantly with his pen, in his callow youth composing odes and in hoary age still striving to understand the classical books completely. Thousands of words flow from his pen, but there is not a solid idea in his breast. He may, as did Yang Xiong, glorify the age with his writings and yet stoop to serve a tyrant such as Wang Mang. No wonder Yang Xiong threw himself out of a window; he had to. That is the way of the scholar of mean type. Though he composes odes by the hundred, what is the use of him?”

Cheng Deshu could make no reply. The other officers now began to hold this man of torrential speech in wholesome fear.

Only two of them, Zhang Wen and Luo Tong, had failed to challenge him, but when they would have tried to pose Zhuge Liang, suddenly someone appeared from without and angrily shouted, “This is not paying fit respect to a guest. You have among you the most wonderful man of the day, and you all sit there trying to entangle him in speech while our archenemy Cao Cao is nearing our borders. Instead of discussing how to oppose Cao Cao, you are all wrangling and disputing!”

All eyes turned toward the speaker. It was Huang Gai of Lingling, who was the Chief of the Commissariat of the South Land.

He turned to address Zhuge Liang, saying, “There is a saying that though something may be gained by talk, there is more to be got by silence.

Why not give my lord the advantage of your valuable advice instead of wasting time in discussion with this crowd?"

"They did not understand," replied Zhuge Liang, "and it was necessary to enlighten them, so I had to speak."

As Huang Gai and Lu Su led the guest toward their master's apartments, they met his brother Zhuge Jin. Zhuge Liang saluted him with the deference due to an elder brother.

Zhuce Jin said, "Why have you not been to see me, brother?"

"I am now in the service of Liu Bei of Yuzhou, and it is right that public affairs precede private obligations. I cannot attend to any private matters till my work is done. You must pardon me, brother."

"After you have seen Marquis Sun Quan, you will come and tell me your news," said he as he left.

As they went along to the audience chamber, Lu Su again cautioned Zhuge Liang against any rash speech, saying, "Do not tell the magnitude of Cao Cao's forces. Please remember."

The latter nodded but made no other reply. When they reached the hall, Sun Quan came down the steps to welcome his guests and was extraordinarily gracious. After the mutual salutations, the guest was given a chair while the Marquis' officials were drawn up in two lines, on one side the civil, on the other the military. Lu Su stood beside Zhuge Liang and listened to his introductory speech.

As Zhuge Liang spoke of Liu Bei's intentions, he glanced up at his host. He noted the green eyes and purple beard and the dignified, commanding air of the man and thought within himself, "Certainly in

appearance this is no common man. He is one to be incited, perhaps, but not to be persuaded. It will be better to see what he has to say first, then I will try to stir him to action.”

The serving of tea being now finished, Sun Quan began with the usual gracious ceremonial expressions.

“Lu Su has often spoken of your genius,” said the host. “It is a great pleasure to meet you. I trust you will confer upon me the advantage of your instruction.”

“I am neither clever nor learned,” was the reply. “It humiliates me to hear such words.”

“You have been at Xinye lately, and you helped your master to fight that decisive battle with Cao Cao, so you must know exactly the measure of his military strength.”

“My master’s army was small and his generals were few; the city was paltry and lacked supplies. Hence, no stand could be made against such a force as Cao Cao had.”

“How many has he in all?”

“Horse and foot, land and marine, he has a million.”

“Is there not some doubt about that?” said Sun Quan, surprised.

“None whatever. When Cao Cao went to Yanzhou, he had the two hundred thousand soldiers of Qingzhou. He gained five or six hundred thousand more when Yuan Shao fell. He has three or four hundred thousand troops newly recruited in the capital. Lately, he has acquired two or three hundred thousand troops in Jingzhou. And if these be reckoned up, the total is not less than a million and a half. Hence I said a million, for I was afraid of frightening your officers.”

Lu Su was much disturbed and turned pale. He looked meaningfully at the bold speaker, but Zhuge Liang would not see. Sun Quan went on to ask if his archenemy had a corresponding number of leaders.

“Cao Cao has enough administrators and strategists to control such a host, and his capable and veteran leaders are more than a thousand, perhaps more than two thousand.”

“What will be Cao Cao’s next move now that he has overcome Jingzhou?”

“He is camped along the river, and he has collected a fleet. If he does not intend to invade the South Land, what can his intentions be?”

“Since that is his intention, it is a case of fight or not fight. I wish you would decide that for me.”

“I have something I could say, but I fear, Sir, you would not care to hear it.”

“I am desirous of hearing your most valuable opinion.”

“Strife has prevailed for a long time, and so you have raised your army in the South Land and Liu Bei collected his forces south of the Han River to act in contest for the empire against Cao Cao. Now, Cao Cao has overcome most of his difficulties, and his recent conquest of Jingzhou has won him great and wide renown. Though there might be one bold enough to tackle him, yet there is no foothold for such. That is how Liu Bei has been forced to come here. But, General, I wish you to measure your forces and decide whether you can venture to meet Cao Cao, and that without loss of time. If you cannot, then follow the advice of your councilors: cease your military preparations and yield, turn your face to the north and serve.”

Sun Quan did not reply. But his guest went on, “You have the reputation of being reasonable, but I know also you are inclined to hesitate.

Still, this matter is most important, and evil will be quickly upon you if you do not decide.”

Then replied Sun Quan, “If what you say represents the actual conditions, why does not Liu Bei yield?”

“Well, you know Tian Heng, that hero of the state of Qi: his character was too noble for him to submit to any shame. It is necessary to remember that Liu Bei also is an offshoot from the Dynastic Family, beside being a man of great renown. Everyone looks up to him. His lack of success is simply the will of Heaven, but manifestly, he could not bow the knee to anyone.”

These last words touched Sun Quan to the quick, and he could not control his anger. He shook out his sleeves, rose, and left the audience chamber. Those present smiled at each other as they dispersed.

But Lu Su was annoyed and reproached Zhuge Liang for his maladroitness of talking to Sun Quan, saying, “Luckily for you, my lord is too large-minded to rebuke you to your face, for you spoke to him most contemptuously.”

Zhuce Liang threw back his head and laughed.

“What a sensitive fellow it is!” cried he. “I know how Cao Cao could be destroyed, but he never asked me. So I said nothing.”

“If you really do know how that could be done, I will certainly beg my lord to ask you.”

“Cao Cao’s hosts in my eyes are but as swarms of ants. I have but to lift my hand, and they will be crushed,” said Zhuge Liang.

Lu Su at once went into his master’s private room, where he found Sun Quan still very irritable and angry.

“Zhuge Liang insulted me too deeply,” said Sun Quan.

“I have already reproached him,” said Lu Su, “and he laughed and said you were too sensitive. He would not give you any advice without being asked for it. Why did you not seek advice from him, my lord?”

At once, Sun Quan’s anger changed to joy. He said, “So he had a plan ready, and his words were meant to provoke me. I did despise him for a moment, and it has very nearly lost me.”

So Sun Quan returned to the audience chamber where the guest was still seated and begged Zhuge Liang to continue his speech.

Sun Quan spoke courteously, saying, “I offended you just now. I hope you are not implacable.”

“And I also was rude,” replied Zhuge Liang. “I entreat pardon.”

Host and guest retired to the inner room where wine was served.

After it had gone round several times, Sun Quan said, “The enemies of Cao Cao were Lu Bu, Liu Biao, Yuan Shao, Yuan Shu, Liu Bei, and my poor self. Now, most of these are gone, and only Liu Bei and I remain. I will never allow the land of Wu to be dictated by another. The only one who could have withstood Cao Cao was Liu Bei, but he has been defeated lately, and what can he do now against such force?”

Zhuce Liang replied, “Although defeated, Liu Bei still has Guan Yu with ten thousand veterans. And Liu Qi still leads the troops of Jiangxia, another ten thousand. Cao Cao’s army is far from home, and the soldiers are worn out. They made a frantic effort to catch up with my master, and the light horse marched one hundred miles in a day and a night. This was the final kick of the crossbow spring, and the bolt was not swift enough to penetrate even the thin silken vesture of Lu. The army can do no more. They are northern people, unskilled in water warfare, and the people of Jingzhou are unwilling supporters. They have no desire to help Cao Cao.

Now if you, General, will assist Liu Bei, Cao Cao will certainly be broken, and he must retire northwards. Then your country and Jingzhou will be strong, and the tripod will be firmly established. But the scheme must be carried out without delay, and only you can decide.”

Sun Quan joyfully replied, “Your words, Master, open up the road clearly. I have decided and shall have no further doubts.”

So the orders were issued forthwith to prepare for a joint attack on Cao Cao. And Sun Quan bade Lu Su bear the news of his decision to all his officers. He himself escorted Zhuge Liang to the guest-quarters and saw to his comfort.

When Zhang Zhao heard of the decision, he met his colleagues and said to them, “Our master has fallen into the trap set by this Zhuge Liang.”

They went in a body to their lord and said, “We hear you are going to attack Cao Cao. But how do you stand when compared with Yuan Shao? In those days, Cao Cao was comparatively weak, and yet he overcame. What is he like today with his countless legions? He is not to be lightly attacked, and to listen to Zhuge Liang’s advice to engage in a conflict is like carrying fuel to a fire.”

Sun Quan made no reply, and Gu Yong took up the argument.

Gu Yong said, “Liu Bei has been defeated, and he wants to borrow our help to beat his enemy. Why must our lord lend himself to his schemes? Pray listen to our leader’s words.”

Doubts again surged up in the mind of Sun Quan.

When the troop of advisers had retired, Lu Su came in, saying, “They came to exhort you not to fight but to compel you to surrender. All this is

simply because they wish to secure the safety of their families. They distort their sense of duty to serve their own ends, and I hope you will not take their advice.”

Sun Quan being sunk in thought and saying nothing, Lu Su went on, “If you hesitate, you will certainly be led astray by the majority and——”

“Retire for a time,” said his master. “I must think it over carefully.”

So Lu Su left the chamber.

Among the soldiers some wished for war, but of the civil officers, all were in favor of surrender, and so there were many discussions and much conflict of opinion. Sun Quan went to his private apartments greatly perplexed. There, his worry was easily discernible, and he neither ate nor slept. He was quite unable to decide finally upon a course of action.

Then, Lady Wu, the sister of his late mother whom he also regarded as his own mother, asked him what so troubled him, and he told her of the threatened danger of Cao Cao and the different opinions his advisers held, one and another, and all his doubts and fears.

“If I fight, I might fail. But if I offer to surrender, perhaps Cao Cao will not tolerate me,” said he.

Then she replied, “Have you forgotten the last words of my sister?”

As to one recovering from a fit of drunkenness, or waking out of a dream, so came to him the dying words of the mother who bore him.

His mother’s advice he called to mind,

“In Zhou Yu’s counsels you safety find.”

What happened will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XI

CHAPTER 44

ZHUGE LIANG STIRS ZHOU YU TO ACTION; SUN QUAN DECIDES TO
ATTACK CAO CAO.

The dying message which Lady Wu recalled to Sun Quan's memory was, "For internal matters, consult Zhang Zhao; for external policy, Zhou Yu."

Wherefore, Zhou Yu was summoned.

But Zhou Yu was already on the way. He had been training his naval forces on Poyang Lake, when he heard of the approach of Cao Cao's hosts, and had started for Chaisang without loss of time. So, before the messenger ordered to call him could start, he had already arrived. As he and Lu Su were close friends, the latter went to welcome him and told him of all that had happened.

"Have no anxiety," said Zhou Yu. "I shall be able to decide this. But go quickly and beg Zhuge Liang to come to see me."

So Lu Su went to seek out Zhuge Liang.

Zhou Yu had many other visitors. First came Zhang Zhao, Zhang Hong, Gu Yong, and Bu Zhi to represent their faction to find out what might be afoot.

They were received, and after the exchange of the usual commonplaces, Zhang Zhao said, "Have you heard of our terrible danger?"

"I have heard nothing," said Zhou Yu.

“Cao Cao and his hordes are encamped up the Han River. He has just sent letters asking our lord to hunt with him in Jiangxia. He may have a desire to absorb this country, but if so, the details of his designs are still secret. We prayed our master to give in his submission and so avoid the horrors of war, but now Lu Su has returned bringing with him the Directing Instructor of Liu Bei’s army, Zhuge Liang. Zhuge Liang, desiring to avenge himself for the recent defeat, has talked our lord into a mind for war, and Lu Su persists in supporting that policy. They only await your final decision.”

“Are you all unanimous in your opinions?”

“We are perfectly unanimous,” said Zhang Zhao.

Zhou Yu said, “The fact is I have also desired to submit for a long time. I beg you to leave me now, and tomorrow we will see our master, and I shall make up his mind for him.”

So they took their leave. Very soon came the military party, led by Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang. They were admitted and duly inquired after their host’s health.

Then the leader Cheng Pu said, “Have you heard that our country is about to pass under another’s government?”

“No, I have heard nothing,” replied the host.

“We helped General Sun Quan to establish his authority here and carve out this kingdom, and to gain that end, we fought many a battle before we conquered the country. Now our lord lends his ear to his civil officers and desires to submit himself to Cao Cao. This is a most shameful and pitiful course, and we would rather die than follow it. So we hope you will decide to fight, and you may depend upon our struggling to the last person.”

“And are you unanimous, Generals?” asked Zhou Yu.

Huang Gai suddenly started up and smote his forehead, saying, "They may take my head, but I swear never to surrender."

"Not one of us is willing to surrender," cried all the others.

"My desire, also, is to decide matters with Cao Cao on the battlefield. How could we think of submission? Now, I pray you retire, Generals, and when I see our lord, I will settle his doubts."

So the war party left. They were quickly succeeded by Zhuge Jin, Lu Fan, and their faction.

They were brought in, and after the usual courtesies, Zhuge Jin said, "My brother has come down the river saying that Liu Bei desires to ally himself with our lord against Cao Cao. The civil and military hold different opinions as to the course to be pursued. But as my brother is so deeply concerned, I am unwilling to say much on either side. We are awaiting your decision."

"And what do you think about it?" asked Zhou Yu.

"Submission is an easy road to tranquility, while the result of war is hard to foretell."

Zhou Yu smiled, "I shall have my mind made up. Come tomorrow to the palace, and the decision shall be announced."

The trimmers took their leave. But soon after came Lu Meng, Gan Ning, and their supporters, also desirous of discussing the same thing, and they told him that opinions differed greatly, some being for peace and others for war. One party constantly disputed with the other.

"I must not say much now," replied Zhou Yu, "but you will see tomorrow in the palace, when the matter will be fully debated."

They went away, leaving Zhou Yu smiling cynically.

About eventide, Lu Su and Zhuge Liang came, and Zhou Yu went out to the main gate to receive them.

When they had taken their proper seats, Lu Su spoke first, saying, "Cao Cao has come against the South Land with a huge army. Our master cannot decide whether to submit or give battle and waits for your decision. What is your opinion?"

Zhou Yu replied, "We may not oppose Cao Cao when he acts at the command of the Emperor. Moreover, he is very strong, and to attack him is to take serious risks. In my opinion, opposition would mean defeat, and since submission means peace, I have decided to advise our lord to write and offer surrender."

"But you are wrong!" stammered Lu Su. "This country has been under the same rule for three generations and cannot be suddenly abandoned to some other. Our late lord Sun Ce said that you were to be consulted on matters beyond the border, and we depended upon you to keep the country as secure and solid as the Taishan Mountains. Now you adopt the view of the weaklings and propose to yield! I cannot believe you mean it."

Replied Zhou Yu, "The six territories contain countless people. If I am the means of bringing upon them the misery of war, they will hate me. So I have decided to advise submission."

"But do you not realize our lord's might and the strength of our country? If Cao Cao does attack, it is very uncertain that he will realize his desire."

The two wrangled for a long time, while Zhuge Liang sat smiling with folded arms.

Presently, Zhou Yu asked, "Why do you smile thus, Master?"

And Zhuge Liang replied, “I am smiling at no other than your opponent, Lu Su, who knows nothing of the affairs of the day.”

“Master,” said Lu Su, “what do you mean?”

“Why, this intention to submit is perfectly reasonable. It is the one proper thing.”

“There!” exclaimed Zhou Yu. “Zhuge Liang knows the times perfectly well, and he agrees with me.”

“But, both of you, why do you say this?” said Lu Su.

Said Zhuge Liang, “Cao Cao is an excellent commander, so good that no one dares oppose him. Only very few have ever attempted it, and they have been exterminated—the world knows them no more. The only exception is Liu Bei, who did not understand the conditions and vigorously contended against him, with the result that he is now at Jiangxia in a very parlous state. To submit is to secure the safety of wives and children, to be rich and honored. But the dignity of the country would be left to chance and fate—however, that is not worth consideration.”

Lu Su interrupted angrily, “Would you make our lord crook the knee to such a rebel as Cao Cao?”

“Well,” replied Zhuge Liang, “there is another way, and a cheaper one. There would be no need to ‘lead the sheep and shoulder wine pots’ for presents, nor any need to yield territory and surrender seals of office. It would not even be necessary to cross the river yourselves. All you would require is a simple messenger and a little boat to ferry a couple of persons across the river. If Cao Cao only got these two under his hand, his hordes and legions would just drop their weapons, furl their banners, and silently vanish away.”

“What two persons could cause Cao Cao to go away as you say?” asked Zhou Yu.

“Two persons who could be easily spared from this populous country. They would not be missed any more than a leaf from a tree or a grain of millet from a granary. But if Cao Cao could only get them, would he not go away rejoicing?”

“But who are the two?” asked Zhou Yu again.

“When I was living in the country, they told me that Cao Cao was building a pavilion on the River Zhang. It was to be named the Bronze Bird Tower. It is an exceedingly handsome building, and he has sought throughout all the world for the most beautiful women to live in it. For Cao Cao really is a sensualist.

“Now there are two very famous beauties in Wu, born of the Qiao family. So beautiful are they that birds alight and fishes drown, the moon hides her face and the flowers blush, for shame at sight of them. Cao Cao has declared with an oath that he only wants two things in this world: the imperial throne in peace and the sight of those two women on the Bronze Bird Terraces. Given these two, he would go down to his grave without regret. This expedition of his—his huge army that threatens this country—has for its real aim these two women. Why do you not buy these two from their father, the State Patriarch Qiao, for any sum however large and send them over the river? The object of the army being attained, it will simply be marched away. This is the ruse that Fan Li of Yue made to the king of Wu of the famous beauty Xi Shi.”

“How do you know Cao Cao so greatly desires these two?” said Zhou Yu.

“Because his son Cao Zhi, who is an able writer, at the command of his father wrote a poem ‘An Ode to the Bronze Bird Terrace,’ theme only

allowing allusions to the family fitness for the throne. He has sworn to possess these two women. I think I can remember the poem, if you wish to hear it. I admire it greatly.”

“Try,” said Zhou Yu.

So Zhuge Liang recited the poem:

“Let me follow in the footsteps of the enlightened
ruler that I may rejoice,
And ascend the storied terrace that I may gladden my
heart,
That I may see the wide extent of the palace,
That I may gaze upon the plans of the virtuous one.
He has established the exalted gates high as the hills,
He has built the lofty towers piercing the blue vault,
He has set up the beautiful building in the midst of the
heavens,
Whence the eye can range over the cities of the west.
On the banks of the rolling River Zhang he planned it,
Whence abundance of fruits could be looked for in his
gardens.
The two towers rise, one on either flank,
This named Golden Phoenix, that Jade Dragon.
He would have the two Qiaos, these beautiful ladies of
Wu,
That he might rejoice with them morning and evening.
Look down; there is the grand beauty of an imperial
city,
And the rolling vapors lie floating beneath.

He will rejoice in the multitude of scholars that
assemble,
Answering to the felicitous dream of King Wen.
Look up; and there is the gorgeous harmony of
springtime,
And the singing of many birds delighting the ear;
The lofty sky stands over all.
The house desires success in its double undertaking,
That the humane influence may be poured out over all
the world,
That the perfection of reverence may be offered to the
Ruler.
Only the richly prosperous rule of Kings Wu and Huan
Could compare with that of the sacred understanding
That fortune! What beauty!
The gracious kindness spreads afar,
The imperial family is supported,
Peace reigns over all the empire,
Bounded only by the universe.
Bright as the glory of the sun and moon,
Ever honorable and ever enduring,
The Ruler shall live to the age of the eastern emperor,
The dragon banner shall wave to the farthest limit.
His glorious chariot shall be guided with perfect
wisdom,
His thoughts shall reform all the world,
Felicitous produce shall be abundant,
And the people shall rest firm.

My desire is that these towers shall endure forever,
And that joy shall never cease through all the ages.

Zhou Yu listened to the end but then suddenly jumped up in a tremendous rage. Turning to the north and pointing with his finger, he cried, “You old rebel, this insult is too deep!”

Zhuge Liang hastily rose too and soothed him, saying, “But remember the Khan of the Xiongnu People. The Han emperor gave him a princess of the family to wife although he had made many incursions into our territory. That was the price of peace. You surely would not grudge two more women from among the common people.”

“You do not know, Sir,” replied Zhou Yu. “Of those two women of the Qiao family you mentioned, Elder Qiao is the widow of Sun Ce, our late ruler, and Younger Qiao is my wife!”

Zhuge Liang feigned the greatest astonishment and said, “No indeed: I did not know. I blundered—a deadly fault, a deadly fault!”

“One of us two has to go: either the old rebel or I. We shall not both live. I swear that!” cried Zhou Yu.

“However, such a matter needs a good deal of thought,” replied Zhuge Liang. “We must not make any mistake.”

Zhou Yu replied, “I hold a sacred trust from my late lord, Sun Ce. I would not bow the knee to any such as Cao Cao. What I said just now was to see how you stood. I left Poyang Lake with the intention of attacking the north, and nothing can change that intention, not even the sword at my breast or the ax on my neck. But I trust you will lend an arm, and we will smite Cao Cao together.”

“Should I be happy enough not to be rejected, I would render such humble service as I could. Perhaps presently I might be able to offer a plan

to oppose him.”

“I am going to see my lord tomorrow to discuss this matter,” said Zhou Yu.

Zhuge Liang and Lu Su then left.

Next day at dawn, Sun Quan went to the council chamber, where his officials, civil and military, were already assembled. They numbered about sixty in all. The civil, with Zhang Zhao at their head, were on the right; the military, with Cheng Pu as their leader, were ranged on the left. All were in full ceremonial dress, and the swords of the soldiers clanked on the pavement.

Soon, Zhou Yu entered.

When Sun Quan had finished the usual gracious remarks, Zhou Yu said, “I hear that Cao Cao is encamped on the river and has sent a dispatch to you, my lord. I would ask what your opinion is.”

Thereupon, the dispatch was produced and handed to Zhou Yu.

After reading it through, he said, smiling, “The old thief thinks there are no people in this land that he writes in this contemptuous strain.”

“What do you think, Sir?” asked Sun Quan.

“Have you discussed this with the officials?” asked Zhou Yu.

“We have been discussing this for days. Some counsel surrender and some advise fight. I am undecided, and therefore, I have asked you to come and decide the point.”

“Who advise surrender?” asked Zhou Yu.

“Zhang Zhao and his party are firmly set in this opinion.”

Zhou Yu then turned to Zhang Zhao and said, "I should be pleased to hear why you are for surrender, Master."

Then Zhang Zhao replied, "Cao Cao has been attacking all opponents in the name of the Emperor, who is entirely in his hands. He does everything in the name of the government. Lately, he has taken Jingzhou and thereby increased his prestige. Our defense against him was the Great River, but now he also has a large fleet and can attack by water. How can we withstand him? Wherefore, I counsel submission till some chance shall offer."

"This is but the opinion of an ill-advised student," said Zhou Yu. "How can you think of abandoning this country that we have held for three generations?"

"That being so," said Sun Quan, "where is a plan to come from?"

"Though Cao Cao assumes the name of the Prime Minister of the empire, he is at heart a rebel. You, O General, are able in war and brave. You are the heir to your father and brother. You command brave and tried soldiers, and you have plentiful supplies. You are able to overrun the whole country and rid it of every evil. There is no reason why you should surrender to a rebel.

"Moreover, Cao Cao has undertaken this expedition in defiance of all the rules of war. The north is unsubdued. Ma Teng and Han Sui threaten his rear, and yet he persists in his southern march. This is the first point against Cao Cao. The northern soldiers are unused to fighting on the water. Cao Cao is relinquishing his well-tried cavalry and trusting to ships. That is the second point against him. Again, we are now in full winter and the weather is at its coldest, so there is no food for the horses. That is the third point against. Soldiers from the central state marching in a wet country among

lakes and rivers will find themselves in an unaccustomed climate and suffer from malaria. That is the fourth point against.

“Now when Cao Cao’s armies have all these points against them, defeat is certain, however numerous they may be, and you can take Cao Cao captive just as soon as you wish. Give me a few legions of veterans, and I will go and destroy him.”

Sun Quan started up from his place, saying, “The rebellious old rascal has been wanting to overthrow the Hans and set up himself for years. He has rid himself of all those he feared, save only myself, and I swear that one of us two shall go now. Both of us cannot live. What you say, noble friend, is just what I think, and Heaven has certainly sent you to my assistance.”

“Thy servant will fight a decisive battle,” said Zhou Yu, “and shrink not from any sacrifice. Only, General, do not hesitate.”

Sun Quan drew the sword that hung at his side and slashed off a corner of the table in front of him, exclaiming, “Let any other person mention surrender, and he shall be served as I have served this table!”

Then he handed the sword to Zhou Yu, at the same time giving him a commission as Commander-in-Chief and Supreme Admiral, Cheng Pu being Vice-Admiral. Lu Su was also nominated as Assistant Commander.

In conclusion, Sun Quan said, “With this sword, you will slay any officer who may disobey your commands.”

Zhou Yu took the sword and turning to the assembly said, “You have heard our lord’s charge to me to lead you to destroy Cao Cao. You will all assemble tomorrow at the riverside camp to receive my orders. Should any be late or fail, then the full rigor of military law—the seven prohibitions and the fifty-four capital penalties—there provided, will be enforced.”

Zhou Yu took leave of Sun Quan and left the chamber. The various officers also went their several ways.

When Zhou Yu reached his own place, he sent for Zhuge Liang to consult over the business in hand. He told Zhuge Liang of the decision that had been taken and asked for a plan of campaign.

“But your master has not yet made up his mind,” said Zhuge Liang. “Till he has, no plan can be decided upon.”

“What do you mean?”

“In his heart, Sun Quan is still fearful of Cao Cao’s numbers and frets over the inequality of the two armies. You will have to explain away those numbers and bring him to a final decision before anything can be effected.”

“What you say is excellent,” said Zhou Yu, and he went to the palace that night to see his master.

Sun Quan said, “You must have something of real importance to say if you come like this at night.”

Zhou Yu said, “I am making my dispositions tomorrow. You have quite made up your mind?”

“The fact is,” said Sun Quan, “I still feel nervous about the disparity of numbers. Surely we are too few. That is really all I feel doubtful about.”

“It is precisely because you have this one remaining doubt that I am come. And I will explain. Cao Cao’s letter speaks of a million of marines, and so you feel doubts and fears and do not wait to consider the real truth. Let us examine the case thoroughly. We find that he has of central regions’ soldiers, say, some one hundred fifty thousand troops, and many of them are

sick. He only got seventy or eighty thousand northern soldiers from Yuan Shao, and many of those are of doubtful loyalty. Now these sick men and these men of doubtful loyalty seem a great many, but they are not at all fearsome. I could smash them with fifty thousand soldiers. You, my lord, have no further anxiety.”

Sun Quan patted his general on the back, saying, “You have explained my difficulty and relieved my doubts. Zhang Zhao is a fool who constantly bars my expeditions. Only you and Lu Su have any real understanding of my heart. Tomorrow, you and Lu Su and Cheng Pu will start, and I shall have a strong reserve ready with plentiful supplies to support you. If difficulties arise, you can at once send for me, and I will engage with my own army.”

Zhou Yu left. But in his innermost heart, he said to himself, “If that Zhuge Liang can gauge my master’s thoughts so very accurately, he is too clever for me and will be a danger. He will have to be put out of the way.”

Zhou Yu sent a messenger over to Lu Su to talk over this last scheme. When he had laid it bare, Lu Su did not favor it.

“No, no,” said Lu Su, “it is self-destruction to make away with your ablest officer before Cao Cao shall have been destroyed.”

“But Zhuge Liang will certainly help Liu Bei to our disadvantage.”

“Try what his brother Zhuge Jin can do to persuade him. It would be an excellent thing to have these two in our service.”

“Yes, indeed,” replied Zhou Yu.

Next morning at dawn, Zhou Yu went to his camp and took his seat in the council tent. The armed guards took up their stations right and left, and the

officers ranged themselves in lines to listen to the orders.

Now Cheng Pu, who was older than Zhou Yu but was made second-in-command, was very angry at being passed over, so he made a pretense of indisposition and stayed away from this assembly. But he sent his eldest son, Cheng Zi, to represent him.

Zhou Yu addressed the gathering, saying, "The law knows no partiality, and you will all have to attend to your several duties. Cao Cao is now more absolute than ever was Dong Zhuo, and the Emperor is really a prisoner in Xuchang, guarded by the most cruel soldiers. We have a command to destroy Cao Cao, and with your willing help we shall advance. The army must cause no hardship to the people anywhere. Rewards for good service and punishments for faults shall be given impartially."

Having delivered this charge, Zhou Yu told off Han Dang and Huang Gai as Leaders of the Van, and ordered the ships under their own command to get under way and go to the Three Gorges. They would get orders by and by. Then, he appointed four armies with two leaders over each: the first body was under Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai; the second, Pan Zhang and Ling Tong; the third, Taishi Ci and Lu Meng; the fourth, Lu Xun and Dong Xi. Lu Fan and Zhu Zhi were appointed inspectors, to move from place to place and keep the various units up to their work and acting with due regard to the general plan. Land and marine forces were to move simultaneously. The expedition would soon start.

Having received their orders, each returned to his command and busied himself in preparation. Cheng Zi, the son of Cheng Pu, returned and told his father what arrangements had been made, and Cheng Pu was amazed at Zhou Yu's skill.

Said he, "I have always despised Zhou Yu as a mere student who would never be a general, but this shows that he has a leader's talent. I must

support him.”

So Cheng Pu went over to the quarters of the Commander-in-Chief and confessed his fault. He was received kindly and all was over.

Next, Zhou Yu sent for Zhuge Jin and said to him, “Evidently your brother is a genius, a man born to be a king’s counselor. Why then does he serve Liu Bei? Now that he is here, I wish you to use every effort to persuade him to stay with us. Thus, our lord would gain able support and you two brothers would be together, which would be pleasant for you both. I wish you success.”

Zhuce Jin replied, “I am ashamed of the little service I have rendered since I came here, and I can do no other than obey your command to the best of my ability.”

Thereupon, he went away to his brother, whom he found in the guesthouse. The younger brother received him; when he had reached the inner rooms, Zhuge Liang bowed respectfully and, weeping, told his experiences since they parted and his sorrow at their separation.

Then Zhuge Jin, weeping also, said, “Brother, do you remember the story of Bo Yi and Shu Qi, the brothers who would not be separated?”

Ah, Zhou Yu has sent him to talk me over, thought Zhuge Liang. So he replied, “They were two of the noblepeople of old days. Yes, I know.”

“Those two, although they perished of hunger near the Shouyang Hills, yet never separated. You and I, born of the same mother and suckled at the same breast, yet serve different masters and never meet. Are you not ashamed when you think of such examples as Bo Yi and Shu Qi?”

Zhuce Liang replied, “You are talking now of love, but what I stand for is duty. We are both men of Han, and Liu Bei is of the family. If you, brother, could leave the South Land and join me in serving the rightful

branch, then on the one side we should be honored as Ministers of Han, and on the other we should be together as people of the same flesh and blood should be. Thus, love and duty would both receive their proper meed. What do you think of it, my brother?"

I came to persuade him and lo! It is I who is being talked over, thought Zhuge Jin.

He had no fitting reply to make, so he rose and took his leave. Returning to Zhou Yu, he related the story of the interview.

"What do you think?" asked Zhou Yu.

"General Sun Quan has treated me with great kindness, and I could not turn my back on him," replied Zhuge Jin.

"Since you decide to remain loyal, there is no need to say much. I think I have a plan to win over your brother."

The wisest people see eye to eye,
For each but sees the right;
But should their several interests clash,
They all the fiercer fight.

The means by which Zhou Yu tried to get the support of Zhuge Liang will be described in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XI

CHAPTER 45

AT THE THREE GORGES, CAO CAO LOSES SOLDIERS; IN THE GATHERING OF HEROES, JIANG GAN IS TRAPPED.

Zhou Yu was very annoyed by the words of Zhuge Jin, and a fierce hatred for Zhuge Liang took root in his heart. He nourished a secret resolve to make away with Zhuge Liang. He continued his preparations for war, and when the troops were all mustered and ready, he went in for a farewell interview with his lord.

“You go on first, Noble Sir,” said Sun Quan. “I will then march to support you.”

Zhou Yu took his leave and then, with Cheng Pu and Lu Su, marched out with the army. He invited Zhuge Liang to accompany the expedition, and when Zhuge Liang cheerfully accepted, the four embarked in the same ship. They set sail, and the fleet made for Xiakou.

About twenty miles from Three Gorges, the fleet anchored near the shore, and Zhou Yu built a stockade on the bank near the middle of their line with the Western Hills as a support. Other camps were made near his. Zhuge Liang, however, took up his quarters in a small ship.

When the camp dispositions were complete, Zhou Yu sent to request Zhuge Liang to come and give him advice. Zhuge Liang came.

After the salutations were ended, Zhou Yu said, “Cao Cao, though he had fewer troops than Yuan Shao, nevertheless overcame Yuan Shao because he followed the advice given by Xun You to destroy Yuan Shao’s supplies at Wuchao. Now, Cao Cao has over eight hundred thousand troops,

while I have but fifty or sixty thousand. In order to defeat him, his supplies must be destroyed first. I have found out that the main depot is at the Iron Pile Mountains. As you have lived hereabout, you know the topography quite well, and I wish to entrust the task of cutting off supplies to you and your colleagues Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun. I will assist you with a thousand soldiers. I wish you to start without delay. In this way, we can best serve our masters.”

Zhuge Liang saw through this at once. He thought to himself, *This is a ruse in revenge for my not having been persuaded to enter the service of the South Land. If I refuse, I shall be laughed at. So I will do as he asks and trust to find some means of deliverance from the evil he intends.*

Therefore, Zhuge Liang accepted the task with alacrity, much to the joy of Zhou Yu.

After the leader of the expedition had taken his leave, Lu Su went to Zhou Yu secretly and said, “Why have you set him this task?”

“Because I wish to compass his death without appearing ridiculous. I hope to get him killed by the hand of Cao Cao and prevent his doing further mischief.”

Lu Su left and went to see Zhuge Liang to find out if he suspected anything. Lu Su found him looking quite unconcerned and getting the soldiers ready to march.

Unable to let Zhuge Liang go without a warning, however, Lu Su put a tentative question, “Do you think this expedition will succeed?”

Zhuge Liang laughingly replied, “I am an adept at all sorts of fighting, with foot, horse, and chariots on land, and marines on the water. There is no doubt of my success. I am not like you and your friend, only capable in one direction.”

“What do you mean by our being capable only in one direction?” said Lu Su.

“I have heard the street children in your country singing:

‘To lay an ambush, hold a pass,
Lu Su is the man to choose;
But when you on the water fight,
Zhou Yu is the man to use.’

“You are only fit for ambushes and guarding passes on land, just as Zhou Yu only understands fighting on the water,” said Zhuge Liang.

Lu Su carried this story to Zhou Yu, which only incensed him the more against Zhuge Liang.

“How dare he flout me, saying I cannot fight a land battle? I will not let him go. I will go myself with ten thousand troops and cut off Cao Cao’s supplies.”

Lu Su went back and told this to Zhuge Liang, who smiled and said, “Zhou Yu only wanted me to go on this expedition because he wanted Cao Cao to kill me. And so I teased him a little. But he cannot bear that.

“Now is the critical moment, and Marquis Sun Quan and my master must act in harmony if we are to succeed. If each one tries to harm the other, the whole scheme will fail. Cao Cao is no fool, and it is he who usually attacks enemies through cutting off their supplies. Do you not think Cao Cao has already taken double precautions against any surprise of his own depot? If Zhou Yu tries, he will be taken prisoner. What he ought to do is to bring about a decisive naval battle, whereby to dishearten the northern soldiers, and then find some other means to defeat them utterly. If you could persuade him what his best course was, it would be well.”

Without loss of time, Lu Su went to Zhou Yu to relate what Zhuge Liang had told him.

Zhou Yu shook his head when he heard it and beat the ground with his foot, saying, "This man is far too clever. He beats me ten to one. He will have to be done away with, or the South Land will suffer."

Said Lu Su, "This is the moment to use people. You must think of the country's good first of all. Once Cao Cao is defeated, you may do as you please."

Zhou Yu had to confess the reasonableness of this.

Liu Bei had ordered his nephew Liu Qi to hold Jiangxia, while he and the bulk of the army returned to Xiakou. Thence, he saw the opposite bank thick with banners and flags and glittering with every kind of arms and armors. He knew then that the expedition from the South Land had started. So he moved all his forces from Jiangxia to Fankou.

Then, he assembled his officers and said to them, "Zhuge Liang went to Wu some time ago, and no word has come from him, so I know not how the business stands. Will anyone volunteer to go to find out?"

"I will go," said Mi Zhu.

So presents were prepared and gifts of flesh and wine, and Mi Zhu prepared to journey to the South Land on the pretext of offering a congratulatory feast to the army. He set out in a small ship and went downriver. He stopped opposite the camp, and the soldiers reported his arrival to Zhou Yu, who ordered him to be brought in. Mi Zhu bowed low and expressed the respect which Liu Bei had for Zhou Yu and offered the

various gifts. The ceremony of reception was followed by a banquet in honor of the guest.

Mi Zhu said, “Zhuge Liang has been here a long time, and I desire that he may return with me.”

“Zhuge Liang is making plans with me, and I could not let him return,” said Zhou Yu. “I also wish to see Liu Bei that we may make joint plans. But when one is at the head of a great army, one cannot get away even for a moment. If your master would only come here, it would be very gracious on his part.”

Mi Zhu agreed that Liu Bei might come and presently took his leave.

Then Lu Su asked Zhou Yu, “What is your reason for desiring Liu Bei to come?”

“Liu Bei is a most bold and dangerous man and must be removed. I am taking this opportunity to persuade him to come. When he shall be slain, a great danger will cease to threaten our interests.”

Lu Su tried to dissuade him from this scheme, but Zhou Yu was deaf to all Lu Su said.

Zhou Yu even issued orders: “Arrange half-a-hundred executioners to be ready to hide within the lining of the tent if Liu Bei decides to come, and when I drop a cup, that will be a signal for them to fall on and slay him.”

Mi Zhu returned and told Liu Bei that his presence was desired by Zhou Yu. Suspecting nothing, Liu Bei at once ordered them to prepare a fast vessel to take him without loss of time.

Guan Yu was opposed to his going, saying, "Zhou Yu is artful and treacherous, and there is no news from Zhuge Liang. Pray think more carefully."

Liu Bei replied, "I have joined my forces to theirs in this attack on our common enemy. If Zhou Yu wishes to see me and I refuse to go, it is a betrayal. Nothing will succeed if both sides nourish suspicions."

"If you have ultimately decided to go, then will I go with you," said Guan Yu.

"And I also," cried Zhang Fei.

But Liu Bei said, "Let Guan Yu come with me while you and Zhao Yun keep guard. Jian Yong will hold Exian. I shall not be away long."

So leaving these orders, Liu Bei embarked with Guan Yu on a small boat. The escort did not exceed twenty. The light craft traveled very quickly down the river. Liu Bei rejoiced greatly at the sight of the war vessels in tiers by the bank, the soldiers in their breastplates, and all the pomp and panoply of war. All was in excellent order.

As soon as he arrived, the guards ran to tell Zhou Yu.

"How many ships has he?" asked Zhou Yu.

They replied, "Only one, and the escort is only about a score."

"His fate is sealed," said Zhou Yu.

Zhou Yu sent for the executioners and placed them in hiding between the outer and inner tents, and when all was arranged for the assassination he contemplated, he went out to receive his visitor. Liu Bei came with his Brother and escort into the midst of the army to the Admiral's tent.

After the salutations, Zhou Yu wished Liu Bei to take the upper seat, but he declined saying, "General, you are famous throughout all the empire, while I am a nobody. Do not overwhelm me with too great deference."

So they took the positions of simple friends, and refreshments were brought in.

Now by chance, Zhuge Liang came on shore and heard that his master had arrived and was with the Commander-in-Chief. The news gave Zhuge Liang a great shock, and he said to himself, "What is to be done now?"

He made his way to the reception tent and stole a look therein. He saw murder written on Zhou Yu's countenance and noted the assassins hidden within the walls of the tent. Then he got a look at Liu Bei, who was laughing and talking quite unconcernedly. But when he noticed the redoubtable figure of Guan Yu near his master's side, he became quite calm and contented.

"My lord faces no danger," said Zhuge Liang, and he went away to the river bank to await the end of the interview.

Meanwhile, the banquet of welcome proceeded. After the wine had gone around several times, Zhou Yu picked up a cup to give the signal agreed upon. But at that moment Zhou Yu saw so fierce a look upon the face of the trusty henchman who stood, sword in hand, behind his guest, that Zhou Yu hesitated and hastily asked who he was.

"That is my Brother, Guan Yu," replied Liu Bei.

Zhou Yu, quite startled, said, "Is he the slayer of Yan Liang and Wen Chou?"

"Exactly; he it is," replied Liu Bei.

The sweat of fear broke out all over Zhou Yu's body and trickled down his back. Then, he poured out a cup of wine and presented it to Guan Yu.

Just then Lu Su came in, and Liu Bei said to him, "Where is Zhuge Liang? I would trouble you to ask him to come."

“Wait till we have defeated Cao Cao,” said Zhou Yu, “then you shall see him.”

Liu Bei dared not repeat his request, but Guan Yu gave him a meaningful look which Liu Bei understood, and he rose, saying, “I would take leave now. I will come again to congratulate you when the enemy has been defeated and your success shall be complete.”

Zhou Yu did not press him to remain, but escorted him to the great gates of the camp, and Liu Bei left. When he reached the riverbank, they found Zhuge Liang awaiting them in their boat.

Liu Bei was exceedingly pleased, but Zhuge Liang said, “Sir, do you know in how great danger you were today?”

Suddenly sobered, Liu Bei said, “No, I did not think of danger.”

“If Guan Yu had not been there, you would have been killed,” said Zhuge Liang.

Liu Bei, after a moment’s reflection, saw that it was true. He begged Zhuge Liang to return with him to Fankou, but Zhuge Liang refused.

“I am quite safe,” said Zhuge Liang. “Although I am living in the tiger’s mouth, I am as steady as the Taishan Mountains. Now, my lord, return and prepare your ships and soldiers. On the twentieth day of the eleventh month, send Zhao Yun with a small ship to the south bank to wait for me. Be sure there is no miscarriage.”

“What are your intentions?” said Liu Bei.

“When the southeast wind begins, I shall return.”

Liu Bei would have questioned him further, but Zhuge Liang pressed him to go. So the boat started up river again, while Zhuge Liang returned to his temporary lodging.

The boat had not proceeded far when appeared a small fleet of fifty ships sweeping down with the current, and in the prow of the leading vessel stood a tall figure armed with a spear. Guan Yu was ready to fight. But when they were near, they recognized that was Zhang Fei, who had come down, fearing lest his brother might be in some difficulty from which the strong arm of Guan Yu might even be insufficient to rescue him.

The Three Brothers thus returned together.

After Zhou Yu, having escorted Liu Bei to the gate of his camp, had returned to his quarters, Lu Su soon came to see him.

“When you had cajoled Liu Bei into coming, why did you not carry out your plan?” asked Lu Su.

“Because of that Guan Yu. He is a very tiger, and he never left his Brother for a moment. If anything had been attempted, he would certainly have had my life.”

Lu Su knew that Zhou Yu spoke the truth. Then suddenly they announced a messenger with a letter from Cao Cao. Zhou Yu ordered them to bring him in and took the letter. But when he saw the superscription *The First Minister of Han to Commander-in-Chief Zhou Yu*, he fell into a frenzy of rage, tore the letter to fragments, and threw them on the ground.

“To death with this fellow!” cried he.

“When two countries are at war, their emissaries are not slain,” said Lu Su.

“Messengers are slain to show one’s dignity and independence,” replied Zhou Yu.

The unhappy bearer of the letter was decapitated and his head sent back to Cao Cao by the hands of his escort.

Zhou Yu then decided to move. The van under Gan Ning was to advance, supported by two wings led by Han Dang and Jiang Qin. Zhou Yu would lead the center body in support. The next morning, the early meal was eaten in the fourth watch, and the ships got underway in the fifth with a great beating of drums.

Cao Cao was greatly angered when he heard that his letter had been torn to fragments, and he resolved to attack forthwith. His advance was led by the Supreme Admiral Cai Mao, the Vice-Admiral Zhang Yun, and others of the Jingzhou officers who had joined his side. Cao Cao went as hastily as possible to the meeting of the three rivers and saw the ships of the South Land sailing up.

In the bow of the foremost ship from the south stood a fine figure of a warrior, who cried, "I am Gan Ning. I challenge anyone to combat!"

Cai Mao sent his young brother, Cai Xun, to accept the challenge. But as Cai Xun's ship approached, Gan Ning shot an arrow and Cai Xun fell. Gan Ning pressed forward, his crossbowmen keeping up a heavy discharge which Cao Cao's troops could not stand. The wings of Han Dang from the left and Jiang Qin from the right also joined in.

Cao Cao's soldiers, being mostly from the dry plains of the north, did not know how to fight effectually on water, and the southern ships had the battle all their own way. The slaughter was very great. However, after a contest lasting till afternoon, Zhou Yu thought it more prudent, in view of the superior numbers of his enemy, not to risk further the advantage he had

gained. So he beat the gongs as the signal to cease battle and recall the ships.

Cao Cao was worsted, but his ships returned to the bank, where a camp was made and order was restored.

Cao Cao sent for his defeated leaders and reproached them, saying, "You did not do your best. You let an inferior force overcome you."

Cai Mao defended himself, saying, "The Jingzhou marines have not been exercised for a long time, and the others have never been trained for naval warfare at all. A naval camp must be instituted, the northern soldiers trained, and the Jingzhou force drilled. When they have been made efficient, they will win victories."

"You are the Supreme Admiral. If you know what should be done, why have you not done it?" said Cao Cao. "What is the use of telling me this?"

So Cai Mao and Zhang Yun organized a naval camp on the river bank. They established twenty-four "Water Gates," with the large ships outside as a sort of rampart, and under their protection, the smaller ships went to and fro freely. At night, when the lanterns and torches were lit, the very sky was illuminated, and the water shone red with the glare. On land, the smoke of the campfires could be traced for one hundred miles without a break.

Zhou Yu returned to camp and feasted his victorious fighting force. A messenger bore the joyful tidings of victory to his master Sun Quan. When night fell, Zhou Yu went up to the summit of one of the hills and looked out over the long line of bright lights stretching toward the west, showing the extent of the enemy's camp. He said nothing, but a great fear came in upon him.

Next day, Zhou Yu decided that he would go in person to find out the strength of the enemy. So he bade them prepare a small squadron, which he manned with strong, hardy men armed with powerful bows and stiff crossbows. He also placed musicians on each ship. They set sail and started up the stream. When they got opposite Cao Cao's camp, the heavy stones that served as anchors were dropped, and the music was played while Zhou Yu scanned the enemy's naval camp. What he saw gave him no satisfaction, for everything was most admirable.

He said, "How well and correctly built is that naval base! Does anyone know the names of those in command?"

"They are Cai Mao and Zhang Yun," said his officers.

"They have lived in the south a long time," said Zhou Yu, "and are thoroughly experienced in naval warfare. I must find some means of removing them before I can effect anything."

Meanwhile, on shore, the sentinels had told Cao Cao that the enemy craft were spying upon them, and Cao Cao ordered out some ships to capture the spies. Zhou Yu saw the commotion of the commanding flags on shore and hastily gave the order to unmoor and sail downstream. The squadron at once got underway and scattered; to and fro went the oars, and each ship seemed to fly. Before Cao Cao's ships could get out after them, they were all far away.

Cao Cao's ships took up the chase but soon saw pursuit was useless. They returned and reported their failure.

Again, Cao Cao found fault with his officers and said, "The other day you lost a battle, and the soldiers were greatly dispirited. Now, the enemy have spied out our camp. What can be done?"

In eager response to his question, one stepped out, saying, "When I was a youth, Zhou Yu and I were fellow students and pledged friends. My three-inch tongue is still good, and I will go over and persuade him to surrender."

Cao Cao, rejoiced to find so speedy a solution, looked at the speaker. It was Jiang Gan of Jiujiang, one of the counseling staff in the camp.

"Are you a good friend of Zhou Yu?" said Cao Cao.

"Rest content, O Prime Minister," replied Jiang Gan. "If I only get on the other side of the river, I shall succeed."

"What preparations are necessary?" asked Cao Cao.

"Just a youth as my servant and a couple of rowers. Nothing else."

Cao Cao offered him wine, wished him success, and sent him on his way.

Clad in a simple, linen robe and seated in his little craft, the messenger reached Zhou Yu's camp and bade the guards say that an old friend, Jiang Gan, wished to see him.

The commander was in his tent at a council when the message came, and he laughed as he said to those about him, "A persuader is coming." Then, he whispered certain instructions in the ear of each one of them, and they went out to await his arrival.

Zhou Yu received his friend in full ceremonial garb. A crowd of officers in rich, silken robes were about him. The guest appeared, his sole attendant a lad dressed in a simple blue gown. Jiang Gan bore himself proudly as he advanced, and Zhou Yu made a low obeisance.

“You have been well, I hope, since last we met,” said Jiang Gan.

“You have wandered far and suffered much in this task of emissary in Cao Cao’s cause,” said Zhou Yu.

“I have not seen you for a very long time,” said the envoy, much taken aback, “and I came to visit you for the sake of old times. Why do you call me an emissary for Cao Cao’s cause?”

“Though I am not so profound a musician as Shi Kuang of old, I can yet comprehend the thought behind the music,” replied Zhou Yu.

“As you choose to treat your old friend like this, I think I will take my leave,” said Jiang Gan.

Zhou Yu laughed again, and taking Jiang Gan by the arm, said, “Well, I feared you might be coming on his behalf to try to persuade me. But if this is not your intention, you need not go away so hastily.”

So the two entered the tent. When they had exchanged salutes and were seated as friends, Zhou Yu bade them call his officers that he might introduce them. They soon appeared, civil and military officials, all dressed in their best. The military officers were clad in glittering, silver armor, and the staff looked very imposing as they stood ranged in two lines.

The visitor was introduced to them all. Presently, a banquet was spread, and while they feasted, the musicians played songs of victory and the wine circulated merrily.

Under the mellowing influence, Zhou Yu’s reserve seemed to thaw and he said, “Jiang Gan is an old fellow student of mine, and we are pledged friends. Though he has arrived here from the north, he is no artful pleader so you need not be afraid of him.”

Then, Zhou Yu took off the commanding sword which he wore as Commander-in-Chief and handed it to Taishi Ci, saying, “You take this and

wear it for the day as master of the feast. This day we meet only as friends and speak only of friendship, and if anyone shall begin a discussion of the questions at issue between Cao Cao and the South Land, just slay him.”

Taishi Ci took the sword and seated himself in his place. Jiang Gan was quite overcome, but he said no word.

Zhou Yu said, “Since I assumed command, I have tasted no drop of wine, but today, as an old friend is present and there is no reason to fear him, I am going to drink freely.” So saying, he quaffed a huge goblet and laughed loudly.

The rhinoceros cups went swiftly round from guest to guest till all were half-drunk. Then, Zhou Yu, laying hold of the guest’s hand, led him outside the tent. The guards who stood around all braced themselves up and seized their shining weapons.

“Do you not think my soldiers a fine lot of fellows?” said Zhou Yu.

“Strong as bears and bold as tigers,” replied Jiang Gan.

Then Zhou Yu led him to the rear of the tent, whence he saw the grain and forage piled up in mountainous heaps.

“Do you not think I have a fairly good store of grain and forage?”

“Your troops are brave and your supplies ample: the empire’s gossip is not baseless, indeed.”

Zhou Yu pretended to be quite intoxicated and went on, “When you and I were students together, we never foresaw a day like this, did we?”

“For a genius like you, it is nothing extraordinary,” said the guest.

Zhou Yu again seized his hand, and they sat down.

“A man of the time I have found, a proper lord to serve. In his service, we rely upon the right feeling between minister and prince outside, and at home, we are firm in the kindly feeling of relatives. He listens to my words

and follows my plans. We share the same good or evil fortune. Even when the great old persuaders like Su Qin, Zhang Yi, Lu Jia, and Li Yiji lived again, even when their words poured forth like a rushing river, their tongues were as a sharp sword, it is impossible to move such as I am!”

Zhou Yu burst into a loud laugh as he finished, and Jiang Gan’s face had become clay-colored. Zhou Yu then led his guest back into the tent, and again they fell to drinking.

Presently, Zhou Yu pointed to the others at the table and said, “These are all the best and bravest of the land of the south. One might call this the ‘Gathering of Heroes.’”

They drank on till daylight failed and continued after lamps had been lit. Zhou Yu even gave an exhibition of swordplay and sang this song:

When a man is in the world, O,
He ought to do his best.
And when he’s done his best, O.
He ought to have his rest.
And when I have my rest, O,
I’ll quaff my wine with zest.
And when I’m drunk as drunk can be, O,
I’ll sing the madman’s litany.

A burst of applause greeted the song. By this time, it was getting late, and the guest begged to be excused.

“The wine is too much for me,” said Jiang Gan.

His host bade them clear the table.

As all the others left, Zhou Yu said, “It has been many a day since I shared a couch with my friend, but we will do so tonight.”

Putting on the appearance of irresponsible intoxication, he led Jiang Gan into the tent, and they went to bed. Zhou Yu simply fell, all dressed as he was, and lay there emitting uncouth grunts and groans, so that for the guest sleep was impossible.

Jiang Gan lay and listened to the various camp noises without and his host's thunderous snores within. About the second watch, he rose and looked at his friend by the dim light of the small lamp. He also saw on the table a heap of papers, and coming out and looking at them furtively, he saw they were letters. Among them, he saw one marked as coming from Cai Mao and Zhang Yun, Cao Cao's Supreme Admiral and Vice-Admiral. He read it and this is what it said:

“We surrendered to Cao Cao, not for the sake of pay but under stress of circumstances. Now we have been able to hold these northern soldiers into this naval camp, but as soon as occasion offers, we mean to have the rebel's head to offer as a sacrifice to your banner. From time to time there will be reports as occasions serve, but you may trust us. This is our humble reply to your letter.”

“Those two were connected with the South Land in the beginning,” thought Jiang Gan, so he secreted the letter in his dress and began to examine the others. But at that moment, Zhou Yu turned over, and so Jiang Gan hastily blew out the light and went to his couch.

Zhou Yu was muttering as he lay there as if dreaming, saying, “Friend, I am going to let you see Cao Cao's head in a day or two.”

Jiang Gan hastily made some reply to load on his host to say more. Then came, “Wait a few days; you will see Cao Cao's head. The old wretch!”

Jiang Gan tried to question him as to what he meant, but Zhou Yu was fast asleep and seemed to hear nothing. Jiang Gan lay there on his couch wide awake till the fourth watch was beating.

Then, someone came in, saying, "General, are you awake?"

At that moment, as if suddenly awakened from the deepest slumber, Zhou Yu started up and said, "Who is this on the couch?"

The voice replied, "Do you not remember, General? You asked your old friend to stay the night with you. It is he, of course."

"I drank too much last night," said Zhou Yu in a regretful tone, "and I forgot. I seldom indulge to excess and am not used to it. Perhaps I said many things I ought not."

The voice went on, "A man has arrived from the north."

"Speak lower," said Zhou Yu, and turning toward the sleeper, he called him by name. But Jiang Gan affected to be sound asleep and made no sign.

Zhou Yu crept out of the tent, while Jiang Gan listened with all his ears. He heard the man say, "Cai Mao and Zhang Yun, the two commanders, said that they cannot execute the plan in a hurry."

But listening as he did with straining ears, he could not make out what followed. Soon after, Zhou Yu reentered and again called out his companion's name. But no reply came, for Jiang Gan was pretending to be in the deepest slumber and to hear nothing. Then, Zhou Yu undressed and went to bed.

As Jiang Gan lay awake, he remembered that Zhou Yu was known to be meticulously careful in affairs, and if in the morning Zhou Yu found that a letter had disappeared, he would certainly slay the offender. So Jiang Gan lay there till near daylight and then called out to his host. Getting no reply,

he rose, dressed, and stole out of the tent. Then he called his servant and made for the camp gate.

“Whither are you going, Sir?” said the watchmen at the gate.

“I fear I am in the way here,” replied Jiang Gan, “and so I have taken leave of the Commander-in-Chief for a time. So do not stop me.”

He found his way to the riverbank and reembarked. Then, with flying oars, he hastened back to Cao Cao’s camp. When he arrived, Cao Cao asked at once how he had fared, and he had to acknowledge failure.

“Zhou Yu is very clever and perfectly high-minded,” said Jiang Gan. “Nothing that I could say moved him in the least.”

“Your failure makes me look ridiculous,” said Cao Cao.

“Well, if I did not win over Zhou Yu, I found out something for you. Send away these people, and I will tell you,” said Jiang Gan.

The servants were dismissed, and then Jiang Gan produced the letter he had stolen from Zhou Yu’s tent. He gave it to Cao Cao. Cao Cao was very angry and sent for Cai Mao and Zhang Yun at once. As soon as they appeared, he said, “I want you two to attack.”

Cai Mao replied, “But the soldiers are not yet sufficiently trained.”

“The soldiers will be well-enough trained when you have sent my head to Zhou Yu, eh?”

Both commanders were dumbfounded, having not the least idea what this meant. They remained silent, for they had nothing to say. Cao Cao bade the executioners lead them away to instant death. In a short time, their heads were produced.

By this time, Cao Cao had thought over the matter, and it dawned upon him that he had been tricked.



A poem says:

No one could stand against Cao Cao,
Of sin he had full share,
But Zhou Yu was more treacherous,
And caught him in a snare.
Two commanders to save their lives,
Betrayed a former lord,
Soon after, as was very met.
Both fell beneath the sword.



The death of these two naval commanders caused much consternation in the camp, and all their colleagues asked the reason for their sudden execution. Though Cao Cao knew they had been victimized, he would not acknowledge it.

So he said, “These two had been remiss, and so have been put to death.”

The others were aghast, but nothing could be done. Two other officers, Mao Jie and Yu Jin, were put in command of the naval camp.



Spies took the news to Zhou Yu, who was delighted at the success of his ruse.

“Those two, Cai Mao and Zhang Yun, were my only source of anxiety,” said he. “Now they are gone: I am quite happy.”

Lu Su said, “General, if you can continue like this, you need not fear Cao Cao.”

“I do not think any of them saw my game,” said Zhou Yu, “except Zhuge Liang. He beats me, and I do not think this ruse was hidden from him. You go and sound him. See if he knew.”

Zhou Yu’s treacherous plot succeeded well,
Dissension sown, his rivals fell.
Drunk with success was he, but sought
To know what cynical Zhuge Liang thought.

What passed between Lu Su and Zhuge Liang will next be related.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XI

CHAPTER 46

USING STRATEGY, ZHUGE LIANG BORROWS ARROWS; JOINING A RUSE,
HUANG GAI ACCEPTS PUNISHMENT.

Lu Su departed on his mission and found Zhuge Liang seated in his little craft.

“There has been so much to do that I have not been able to come to listen to your instructions,” said Lu Su.

“That is truly so,” said Zhuge Liang, “and I have not yet congratulated the Commander-in-Chief.”

“What have you wished to congratulate him upon?”

“Why, Sir, the matter upon which he sent you to find out: whether I knew about it or not. Indeed, I can congratulate him on that.”

Lu Su turned pale and gasped, saying, “But how did you know, Master?”

“The ruse succeeded well, thus played off on Jiang Gan. Cao Cao has been taken in this once, but he will soon rise to it. Only he will not confess his mistake. However, the two men are gone, and the South Land is freed from a grave anxiety. Do you not think that is a matter for congratulation? I hear Mao Jie and Yu Jin are the new admirals, and in their hands lie both good and evil for the fate of the northern fleet.”

Lu Su was quite dumbfounded. He stayed a little time longer, passing the time in making empty remarks, and then took his leave.

As he was going away, Zhuge Liang cautioned him, saying, "Do not let Zhou Yu know that I know his ruse. If you let him know, he will seek some chance to do me harm."

Lu Su promised. Nevertheless, he went straight to his chief and related the whole thing, just as it happened.

"Really, he must be got rid of," said Zhou Yu. "I have quite decided to put the man out of the way."

"If you slay him, will not Cao Cao laugh at you?"

"Oh, no! I will find a legitimate way of getting rid of him so that he shall go to his death without resentment."

"But how can you find a legitimate way of assassinating him?"

"Do not ask too much. You will see presently."

Soon after, all the officers were summoned to the main tent, and Zhuge Liang's presence was desired. He went contentedly enough.

When all were seated, Zhou Yu suddenly addressed Zhuge Liang, saying, "I am going to fight a battle with the enemy soon on the water. What weapons are the best?"

"On a great river, arrows are the best," said Zhuge Liang.

"Your opinion and mine agree. But at the moment, we are short of them. I wish you would undertake to supply about a hundred thousand arrows for the naval fight. As it is for the public service, you will not decline, I hope."

"Whatever task the Commander-in-Chief lays upon me, I must certainly try to perform," replied Zhuge Liang. "May I inquire by what date you require the hundred thousand arrows?"

"Could you have them ready in ten days?"

“The enemy will be here very soon. Ten days will be too late,” said Zhuge Liang.

“In how many days do you estimate the arrows can be ready?”

“Let me have three days. Then you may send for your hundred thousand.”

“No joking, remember!” said Zhou Yu. “There is no joking in war time.”

“Dare I joke with the Commander-in-Chief? Give me a formal military order. If I have not completed the task in three days, I will take my punishment.”

Zhou Yu, secretly delighted, sent for the secretaries and prepared the commission then and there.

Then he drank to the success of the undertaking and said, “I shall have to congratulate you most heartily when this is accomplished.”

“This day is too late to count,” said Zhuge Liang. “On the third from tomorrow morning, send five hundred soldiers to the riverside to convey the arrows.”

They drank a few more cups together, and then Zhuge Liang took his leave.

After he had gone, Lu Su said, “Do you not think there is some deceit about this?”

“Clearly it is not I! It is he who has signed his own death warrant,” said Zhou Yu. “Without being pressed in the least, he asked for a formal order in the face of the whole assembly. Even if he grew a pair of wings, he could not escape. Only I will just order the workers to delay him as much as they can, and not supply him with materials, so that he is sure to fail. And

then, when the certain penalty is incurred, who can criticize? You can go and inquire about it all and keep me informed.”

So off went Lu Su to seek Zhuge Liang, who at once reproached him with having blabbed about the former business.

Zhuce Liang said, “He wants to hurt me, as you know, and I did not think you could not keep my secret. And now there is what you saw today, and how do you think I can get a hundred thousand arrows made in three days? You will simply have to rescue me.”

“You brought the misfortune on yourself; how can I rescue you?” said Lu Su.

“I look to you for the loan of twenty vessels, manned each by thirty people. I want blue cotton screens and bundles of straw lashed to the sides of the boats. I have good use for them. On the third day, I shall undertake to deliver the fixed number of arrows. But on no account must you let Zhou Yu know, or my scheme will be wrecked.”

Lu Su consented, and this time he kept his word. He went to report to his chief as usual, but he said nothing about the boats.

He only said, “Zhuge Liang is not using bamboo or feathers or glue or varnish but has some other way of getting arrows.”

“Let us await the three days’ limit,” said Zhou Yu, puzzled though confident.

On his side, Lu Su quietly prepared a score of light swift boats, each with its crew, and the blue screens and bundles of grass complete, and when these were ready, he placed them at Zhuge Liang’s disposal.

Zhuge Liang did nothing on the first day, nor on the second. On the third day at the middle of the fourth watch, Zhuge Liang sent a private message asking Lu Su to come to his boat.

“Why have you sent for me, Sir?” asked Lu Su.

“I want you to go with me to get those arrows.”

“Whither are you going?”

“Do not ask. You will see.”

Then, the twenty boats were fastened together by long ropes and moved over to the north bank. The night proved very foggy, and the mist was very dense along the river, so that one person could scarcely see another. In spite of the fog, Zhuge Liang urged the boats forward as if into the vast fairy kingdom.



There is a poem on these river fogs:

Mighty indeed is the Great River!

Rising far in the west, in the Emei and Min
Mountains,

Plowing its way through Wu, east flowing, resistless,
Swelled by its nine tributary streams, rolling down
from the far north,

Aided and helped by a hundred rivulets swirling and
foaming,

Ocean receives it at last welcoming, joyful, its waters.

Therein abide sea nymphs and water gods,

Enormous whales a thousand fathoms long,

Nine-headed monstrous beasts, reptiles and octopi,
Demons and uncouth creatures wondrous strange.
In faith it is the home and safe retreat
Of devils and sprites, and wondrous growths,
And eke the battle ground of valiant humans.
At times occur strange strife of elements,
When darkness strives on light's domains that
 encroach,
Whereat arises in the vaulted dome of blue
White wreaths of fog that toward the center roll.
Then darkness falls, too dense for any torch
Illumine; only clanging sounds can pass.
The fog at first appears, a vaporous wreath
Scarce visible. But thickening fast, it veils
The Southern Hills, the painted leopard's home.
And spreads afar, until the northern sea
Leviathans are amazed and lose their course.
And denser yet it touches on the sky.
And spreads a heavy mantle over the earth.
Then, wide as is the high pitched arch of heaven,
Therein appears no single rift of blue.
Now mighty whales lead up their spouses to sport
Upon the waves, the sinuous dragons dive
Deep down and, breathing, swell the heaving sea,
The earth is moist as with the early rains,
And spring's creative energy is chilled.
Both far and wide and high the damp fog spreads,
Great cities on the eastern bank are hid,

Wide ports and mountains in the south are lost,
Whole fleets of battle ships, a thousand keels,
Hide in the misty depths; frail fishing boats
High riding on a wave are seen—and lost.
The gloom increases and the domed sky
Grows dark and darker as the sun's light fails.
The daylight dies, dim twilight's reign begins,
The ruddy hills dissolve and lose their hue.
The skill of matchless King Yu would fail to sound
The depth and height; and Li Lou's eye, though keen,
Could never pierce this gloom.
Now is the time, O sea and river gods, to use your
powers.

The gliding fish and creeping water folk
Are lost; there is no track for bird or beast.
Fair Penglai Isles are hidden from our sight,
The lofty gates of heaven have disappeared.
Nature is blurred and indistinct, as when
A driving rain storm hurries over the earth.
And then, perhaps, within the heavy haze,
A noisome serpent vents his venom foul
And plagues descend, or impish demons work
Their wicked wills.
Ills fall on humans but do not stay,
Heaven's cleansing breath sweeps them sway,
But while they last the mean ones cry,
The nobler suffer silently.
The greatest turmoil is a sign

Of quick return to state benign.



The little fleet reached Cao Cao's naval camp about the fifth watch, and Zhuge Liang gave orders to form a line, lying prows west, and then to beat the drums and shout.

“But what shall we do if they attack us?” exclaimed Lu Su.

Zhuge Liang replied with a smile, “I think their fleet will not venture out in this fog. Go on with your wine, and let us be happy. We will go back when the fog lifts.”

As soon as the shouting from the river was heard by those in the camp, the two admirals, Mao Jie and Yu Jin, ran off to report to Cao Cao, who said, “Coming up in a fog like this means that they have prepared an ambush for us. Do not go out, but get all the force together and shoot at them.”

He also sent orders to the ground camps to dispatch six thousand archers and crossbowmen to aid the marines. The naval forces were then lined up shooting on the bank to prevent a landing.

Presently, the Wu soldiers arrived, and ten thousand and more enemy soldiers were shooting down into the river, where the arrows fell like rain. By and by, Zhuge Liang ordered the boats to turn round so that their prows pointed east and to go closer in so that many arrows might hit them.

Zhuge Liang ordered the drums to be kept beating till the sun was high and the fog began to disperse, when the boats got under way and sailed

downstream. The whole twenty boats were bristling with arrows on both sides.

As they left, Zhuge Liang asked all the crews to shout derisively, “We thank you, Sir Prime Minister, for the arrows!”

They told Cao Cao, but by the time he came, the light boats, helped by the swift current, were seven miles long down the river and pursuit was impossible. Cao Cao saw that he had been duped and was very sorry, but there was no help for it.

On the way down, Zhuge Liang said to his companion, “Every boat must have five or six thousand arrows and so, without the expenditure of an ounce of energy, we must have more than ten myriad arrows, which tomorrow can be shot back again at Cao Cao’s army to his great inconvenience.”

“You are really superhuman,” said Lu Su. “But how did you know there would be a thick fog today?”

“One cannot be a leader without knowing the workings of Heaven and the ways of Earth. One must understand the secret gates and the interdependence of the elements, the mysteries of tactics and the value of forces. It is but an ordinary talent.

“I calculated three days ago that there would be a fog today, and so I set the limit at three days. Zhou Yu would give me ten days but neither artificers nor materials, so that he might find occasion to put me to death as I knew. But my fate lies with the Supreme, thus how could Zhou Yu harm me?”

Lu Su could not but agree. When the boats arrived, five hundred soldiers were in readiness on the bank to carry away the arrows. Zhuge Liang bade them go on board the boats, collect them and bear them to the tent of the Commander-in-Chief. Lu Su went to report that the arrows had been obtained and told Zhou Yu by what means.

Zhou Yu was amazed and sighed sadly, saying, "He is better than I. His methods are more than human."



Thick lies the fog on the river,
Nature is shrouded in white,
Distant and near are confounded,
Banks are no longer in sight.
Fast fly the pattering arrows,
Stick in the boats of the fleet.
Now can full tale be delivered,
Zhuge Liang is victor complete.

When, shortly after his return, Zhuge Liang went to the tent of the Commander-in-Chief, he was welcomed by Zhou Yu, who came forward to greet him, saying, "Your superhuman predictions compel one's esteem."

"There is nothing remarkable in that trifling trick," replied he.

Zhou Yu led him within, and wine was brought.

Then, Zhou Yu said, "My lord sent yesterday to urge me to advance, but I have no master plan ready. I wish you would assist me, Master."

“But where should I, a man of poor everyday ability, find such a plan as you desire?”

“I saw the enemy’s naval camp just lately, and it looked very complete and well-organized. It is not an ordinary place to attack. I have thought of a plan, but I am not sure it will answer. I should be happy if you would decide for me.”

“General,” replied Zhuge Liang, “do not say what your plan is, but each of us will write in the palm of his hand and see whether our opinions agree.”

So brush and ink were sent for, and Zhou Yu first wrote on his own palm and then passed the pen to Zhuge Liang, who also wrote. Then, getting close together on the same bench, each showed his hand to the other, and both burst out laughing, for both had written the same word: “Fire.”

“Since we are of the same opinion,” said Zhou Yu, “there is no longer any doubt. But our intentions must be kept secret.”

“Both of us are public servants, and what would be the sense in telling our plans? I do not think Cao Cao will be on his guard against this, although he has had two experiences. You may put your scheme into force.”

They finished their wine and separated. Not an officer knew a word of their plans.

Now Cao Cao had expended a myriad arrows in vain and was much irritated in consequence. He deeply desired revenge.

Xun You proposed a ruse, saying, “The two strategists on the side of the enemy are Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang, two men most difficult to get the better of. Let us send someone who shall pretend to surrender to them but

really be a spy on our behalf and a helper in our schemes. When we know what is happening, we can plan to meet it.”

“I had thought of that myself,” replied Cao Cao. “Whom do you think the best person to send?”

“Cai Mao has been put to death, but all his clan and family are in the army, and his two younger brothers are junior generals. You have them most securely in your power and may send them to surrender. The ruler of the South Land will never suspect deceit there.”

Cao Cao decided to act on this plan and, in the evening, summoned Cai Zhong and Cai He to his tent, where he told them, saying, “I want you to pretend to surrender to the South Land so that you can gather intelligence and send it back. When all done, you will be richly rewarded. But do not betray me.”

“Our families are in Jingzhou, and that place is yours,” replied they. “Should we dare betray? You need have no doubts, Sir. You will soon see the heads of both Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang at your feet.”

Cao Cao gave them generous gifts. Soon after, the two men, each with his five hundred soldiers, set sail with a fair wind for the opposite bank.

As Zhou Yu was preparing for the attack, the arrival of some northern ships was announced. They bore the two younger brothers of Cai Mao, who had come as deserters.

They were led in and, bowing before the general, said, weeping, “Our innocent brother has been put to death, and we desire vengeance. So we have come to offer allegiance to you. We pray you appoint us to the vanguard.”

Zhou Yu appeared very pleased and made them presents. Then, he ordered them to join Gan Ning in leading the van. They thanked him and regarded their scheme as already a success.

But Zhou Yu gave Gan Ning secret orders, saying, "They have come without their families, and so I know their desertion is only pretense. They have been sent as spies, and I am going to meet their ruse with one of my own. They shall have some information to send. You will treat them well but keep a careful guard over them. On the day our soldiers start the offense, they shall be sacrificed to the flag. But be very careful that nothing goes wrong."

Gan Ning went away.

Then Lu Su came to tell Zhou Yu, saying, "Everyone agrees in thinking the surrender of Cai Zhong and Cai He feigned and they should be rejected."

"But they wish to avenge the death of their brother," said the Fleet Admiral. "Where is the pretense? If you are so suspicious, you will receive nobody at all."

Lu Su left much piqued and went to see Zhuge Liang, to whom he told the story. Zhuge Liang only smiled.

"Why do you smile?" said Lu Su.

"I smile at your simplicity. The General is playing a game. Spies cannot easily come and go, so these two have been sent to feign desertion that they may act as spies. The General is meeting one ruse with another. He wants them to give false information. Deceit is not to be despised in war, and his scheme is the correct one to employ."

Then, Lu Su understood.

That night, as Zhou Yu was sitting in his tent, Huang Gai came to see him privately.

Zhou Yu said, "You have surely some wise plan to propose that you come at night like this."

Huang Gai replied, "The enemy are more numerous than we, and it is wrong to delay. Why not burn them out?"

"Who suggested that to you?"

"I thought of it myself. Nobody suggested it," replied Huang Gai.

"I just wanted something like this, and that is why I kept those two pretended deserters. I want them to give some false news. The pity is that I have no one to feign desertion to the other side and work my plan."

"But I will carry out your plan," said Huang Gai.

"But if you cannot show some injury, you will not be believed," said Zhou Yu.

"The Sun family have been very generous to me, and I would not resent being crushed to death to repay them," said Huang Gai.

Zhou Yu bowed and thanked him, saying, "If you would not object to some bodily suffering, then the South Land would indeed be happy."

"Kill me. I do not mind," repeated Huang Gai as he took his leave.

Next day, the drums called all the officers together to the Commander-in-Chief's tent, and Zhuge Liang came with the others.

Zhou Yu said, "The enemy's camps extend about one hundred miles so that the campaign will be a long one. Each leader is to prepare supplies for three months."

Scarcely had he spoken when Huang Gai started up, crying, "Say not three months. Be ready for thirty months, and even then, it will not be ended. If you can destroy them this month, then all is well. If you cannot, then it were better to take Zhang Zhao's advice, throw down your weapons, turn to the north, and surrender."

Zhou Yu's anger flared up, and he flushed, crying, "Our lord's orders were to destroy Cao Cao, and whoever mentions the word 'surrender' should be put to death! Now, the very moment when the two armies are to engage, you dare talk of surrender and damp the ardor of my army! If I do not slay you, how can I support the others?" He ordered the lictors to remove Huang Gai and execute him without delay.

Huang Gai then flamed up in turn, saying, "This is the third generation since I went with General Sun Jian and we overran the southeast. Whence have you sprung up?"

This made Zhou Yu perfectly furious, and Huang Gai was ordered to instant death. But Gan Ning interfered.

Said he, "He is a veteran officer of the South Land. Pray pardon him!"

"What are you prating about?" cried Zhou Yu. "Dare you come between me and my duty?" Turning to the lictors, Zhou Yu ordered them to drive Gan Ning forth with blows.

The other officials fell on their knees entreating pity for Huang Gai. "He is, indeed, most worthy of death, but it would be a loss to the army. We pray you forgive him. Record his fault for the moment, and after the enemy shall have been defeated, then put him to death."

But Zhou Yu was implacable. The officers pleaded with tears.

At length, however, he seemed moved, saying, "Had you not interceded, he should certainly have suffered death. But now, I will mitigate

the punishment to a beating. He shall not die.”

Zhou Yu turned to the lictors and bade them deal the culprit one hundred blows. Again, his colleagues prayed for remission, but Zhou Yu angrily pushed over the table in front of him and roared to the officers to get out of the way and let the sentence be executed.

So Huang Gai was stripped, thrown to the ground, and given fifty blows. At this point, the officers again prayed that he be let off.

Zhou Yu sprang from his chair and, pointing his finger at Huang Gai, said, “If you dare flout me again, you shall have the other fifty. If you are guilty of any disrespect, you shall be punished for both faults!” With this, he turned into the inner part of the tent, growling as he went, while the officers helped their beaten colleague to his feet.

Huang Gai was in a deplorable state. His back was cut in many places, and the blood was flowing in streams. They led him to his own quarters, and on the way, he swooned several times. His case seemed most pitiable.

Lu Su went to see the suffering officer and then called on Zhuge Liang in his boat.

Lu Su related the story of the beating and said, “Though the other officers have been cowed into silence, I thought you, Sir, might have interceded. You are a guest and not under Zhou Yu’s orders. Why did you stand by with your hands up your sleeves and say never a word?”

“You insult me,” said Zhuge Liang, smiling.

“Why do you say that? I have never insulted you, never since the day we came here together.”

“Do you not know that terrible beating was but a ruse? How could I try to dissuade Zhou Yu?” Then Lu Su began to perceive, and Zhuge Liang continued, saying, “Cao Cao would not be taken in unless there was some real bodily suffering. Zhou Yu is going to send Huang Gai over as a deserter, and Zhou Yu will see to it that the two of Cao Cao’s spies duly tell the tale. But when you see the General, you must not tell him that I saw through the ruse. You say that I am very angry like the others.”

Lu Su went to see Zhou Yu and asked, “Why have you so cruelly beaten a proven and trusty officer?”

“Do the officers resent it?” asked Zhou Yu.

“They are all upset about it.”

“And what does your friend think?”

“Zhuge Liang also resents it in his heart, and he thinks you have made a mistake.”

“Then I have deceived him for once,” said Zhou Yu gleefully.

“What mean you?” cried Lu Su.

“That beating that Huang Gai got is part of my ruse. I am sending him to Cao Cao as a deserter, and so I have supplied a reason for desertion. Then, I am going to use fire against the enemy.”

Lu Su kept silence, but he recognized that Zhuge Liang was again right.

Meanwhile, Huang Gai lay in his tent, whither all his colleague officers went to condole him and inquire after his health. But Huang Gai would say nary a word. He only lay sighing deeply from time to time.

But when the Strategist Kan Ze came, Huang Gai told them to bring him to the room where he lay. Then he bade the servants go away.

Kan Ze said, "Surely you must have some serious quarrel with the General."

"I have none," said Huang Gai.

"Then this beating is just part of a ruse?"

"How did you guess?" said Huang Gai.

"Because I watched the General, and I guessed about nine-tenths of the truth."

Huang Gai said, "You see, I have been very generously treated by the Sun family, all three of them, and have no means of showing my gratitude except by offering to help in this ruse. True: I suffer, but I do not regret that. Among all those I know in the army, there is not one I am intimate with except yourself. You are true, and I can talk with you as a friend."

"I suppose you wish me to present your surrender letter to Cao Cao. Is that it?"

"Just that; will you do it?" said Huang Gai.

Kan Ze consented joyfully.

Even the warrior's body is but a stake in the game,
The friend so ready to help him proves that their hearts
are the same.

Kan Ze's reply will be read in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XI

CHAPTER 47

KAN ZE PRESENTS A TREACHEROUS LETTER; PANG TONG SUGGESTS CHAINING THE SHIPS.

Kan Ze was from Shanyin, a son of a humble family. He loved books, but as he was too poor to buy, he used to borrow. He had a wonderfully tenacious memory, was very eloquent and no coward. Sun Quan had employed him among his advisers, and he and Huang Gai were excellent friends.

Now Huang Gai had thought of Kan Ze to present the treacherous letter to Cao Cao, as Kan Ze's gifts made him most suitable.

Kan Ze accepted with enthusiasm, saying, "When you, my friend, have suffered so much for our lord, could I spare myself? No! While a person lives, he must go on fulfilling his mission, or he is no better than the herbs that rot in the field."

Huang Gai slipped off the couch and came over to salute him.

"However, this matter must speed," continued Kan Ze. "There is no time to lose."

"The letter is already written," said Huang Gai.

Kan Ze received it and left. That night he disguised himself as an old fisherman and started in a small punt for the north shore, under the cold, glittering light of the stars. Soon, he drew near the enemy's camp and was captured by the patrol.

Without waiting for day, they informed Cao Cao, who said at once, "Is he not just a spy?"

"No," said they, "he is alone, just an old fisherman. And he says he is an adviser in the service of the South Land named Kan Ze, and he has come on secret business."

"Bring him," said Cao Cao, and Kan Ze was led in.

Cao Cao was seated in a brilliantly-lighted tent. He was leaning on a small table, and as soon as he saw the prisoner, he said harshly, "You are an adviser of East Wu. What then are you doing here?"

"People say that you greedily welcome people of ability. I do not think your question a very proper one. O friend, Huang Gai, you have made a mistake," said Kan Ze.

"You know I am fighting against East Wu, and you come here privately. Why should I not question you?"

"Huang Gai is an old servant of Wu, one who has served three successive rulers. Now, he has been cruelly beaten for no fault before the faces of all the officers in Zhou Yu's camp. He is grievously angry about this and wishes to desert to your side that he may be avenged. He discussed it with me, and as we are inseparable, I have come to give you his letter asking whether you would receive him."

"Where is the letter?" said Cao Cao.

The missive was produced and presented. Cao Cao opened it and read:

"I, Huang Gai, have been generously treated by the Sun family and have served them single-heartedly. Lately, they have been discussing an attack with our forces on the enormous army of the central government. Everyone knows our few are no match for such a multitude, and every officer of the South Land, wise or foolish,

recognizes that quite well. However, Zhou Yu, who, after all, is but a youth and a shallow-minded simpleton, maintains that success is possible and rashly desires to smash stones with an egg. Beside, he is arbitrary and tyrannical, punishing for no crime and leaving meritorious service unrewarded. I am an old servant and for no reason have been shamed in the sight of people. Wherefore I hate him in my heart.

“You, O Prime Minister, treat people with sincerity and are ready to welcome ability, and so I, and those under my leadership, desire to enter your service whereby to acquire reputation and remove the shameful stigma. The commissariat, weapons, and the supply ships that I am commanding will also come over to you. In perfect sincerity I state these matters. I pray you not to doubt me.”

Leaning there on the low table by his side, Cao Cao turned this letter over and over and read it again and again.

Then he smacked the table, opened his eyes wide with anger, saying, “Huang Gai is trying to play the personal-injury trick on me, is he? And you are in it as the intermediary to present the letter. How dare you come to sport with me?”

Cao Cao ordered the lictors to thrust forth the messenger and take off his head. Kan Ze was hustled out, his face untroubled. On the contrary, he laughed aloud.

At this, Cao Cao told them to bring him back and harshly said to him, “What do you find to laugh at now that I have foiled you and your ruse has failed?”

“I was not laughing at you. I was laughing at my friend’s simplicity.”

“What do you mean by his simplicity?”

“If you want to slay, slay. Do not trouble me with a multitude of questions.”

“I have read all the books on the art of war, and I am well-versed in all ways of misleading the enemy. This ruse of yours might have succeeded with many, but it will not do for me.”

“And so you say that the letter is a vicious trick?” said Kan Ze.

“What I say is that your little slip has sent you to the death you risked. If the thing was real and you were sincere, why does not the letter name a time of coming over? What have you to say to that?”

Kan Ze waited to the end and then laughed louder than ever, saying, “I am so glad you are not frightened but can still boast of your knowledge of the books of war. Now you will not lead away your soldiers. If you fight, Zhou Yu will certainly capture you. But how sad to think I die at the hand of such an ignorant fellow!”

“What mean you? I, ignorant?”

“You are ignorant of any strategy and a victim of unreason. Is not that sufficient?”

“Well then, tell me where is any fault.”

“You treat wise people too badly for me to talk to you. You can finish me and let there be an end of it.”

“If you can speak with any show of reason, I will treat you differently.”

“Do you not know that when one is going to desert one’s master and become a renegade, one cannot say exactly when the chance will occur? If one binds oneself to a fixed moment and the thing cannot be done just then, the secret will be discovered. One must watch for an opportunity and take it

when it comes. Think: is it possible to know exactly when? But you know nothing of common sense. All you know is how to put good people to death. So you really are an ignorant fellow!”

At this, Cao Cao changed his manner, got up, and came over to the prisoner, bowing, “I did not see clearly. That is quite true. I offended you, and I hope you will forget it.”

“The fact is that Huang Gai and I are both inclined to desert to you. We even yearn for it as a child desires its parents. Is it possible that we should play you false?”

“If you two could render me so great a service, you shall certainly be richly rewarded.”

“We do not desire rank or riches. We come because it is the will of Heaven and the plain way of duty.”

Then, wine was set out, and Kan Ze was treated as an honored guest. While they were drinking, someone came in and whispered in Cao Cao’s ear.

He replied, “Let me see the letter.”

Whereupon, the man pulled out and gave him a letter, which evidently pleased him.

That is from the two Cai brothers, thought Kan Ze. They are reporting the punishment of my friend, and that will be proof of the sincerity of his letter.

Turning toward Kan Ze, Cao Cao said, “I must ask you to return to settle the date with your friend. As soon as I know, I will have a force waiting.”

“I cannot return. Pray, Sir, send some other one you can trust.”

“If someone else should go, the secret would be discovered.”

Kan Ze refused again and again but at last gave way, saying, "If I am to go, I must not wait here. I must be off at once."

Cao Cao offered him gold and silks, which were refused. Kan Ze started, left the camp, and reembarked for the south bank, where he related all that had happened to Huang Gai.

"If it had not been for your persuasive tongue, then had I undergone this suffering in vain," said Huang Gai.

"I will now go to get news of the two Cai brothers," said Kan Ze.

"Excellent," said Huang Gai.

Kan Ze went to the camp commanded by Gan Ning.

When they were seated, Kan Ze said to his host, "I was much distressed when I saw how disgracefully you were treated for your intercession on behalf of Huang Gai."

Gan Ning smiled. Just then, the two Cai brothers came, and host and guest exchanged glances.

Gan Ning said, "The truth is Zhou Yu is overconfident, and he reckons us as nobody. We count for nothing. Everyone is talking of the way I was insulted." And he shouted and gritted his teeth and smacked the table in his wrath.

Kan Ze leaned over toward his host and said something in a very low voice, at which Gan Ning bent his head and sighed.

Cai He and Cai Zhong gathered from this scene that both Gan Ning and Kan Ze were ripe for desertion and determined to probe them. "Why, Sir, do you anger him? Why not be silent about your injuries?" said they.

“What know you of our bitterness?” said Kan Ze.

“We think you seem much inclined to go over to Cao Cao,” said they.

Kan Ze, at this, lost color. Gan Ning started up and drew his sword, crying, “They have found out. They must die to keep their mouths shut!”

“No, no,” cried the two in a flurry. “Let us tell you something quite secret!”

“Quick, then!” cried Gan Ning.

So Cai He said, “The truth is that we are only pretended deserters, and if you two gentlemen are of our way of thinking, we can manage things for you.”

“But are you speaking the truth?” said Gan Ning.

“Is it likely we should say such a thing if it were untrue?” cried both at the same moment.

Gan Ning put on a pleased look and said, “Then this is the very Heaven-given chance.”

“You know, we have already told Cao Cao of the Huang Gai affair and how you were insulted.”

“The fact is I have given the Prime Minister a letter on behalf of Huang Gai, and he sent me back again to settle the date of Huang Gai’s desertion,” said Kan Ze.

“When an honest person happens upon an enlightened master, his heart will always be drawn toward him,” said Gan Ning.

The four then drank together and opened their hearts to each other. The two brothers, Cai Zhong and Cai He, wrote a private letter to their master, saying Gan Ning had agreed to join in their plot and play the traitor, and Kan Ze also wrote, and they sent the letters secretly to Cao Cao.

Kan Ze’s letter said:

“Huang Gai has found no opportunity so far. However, when he comes, his boat can be recognized by a black, indented flag. That shall mean he is on board.”

However, when Cao Cao got these two letters, he was still doubtful and called together his advisers to talk over the matter.

Said he, “On the other side, Gan Ning has been put to shame by the Commander-in-Chief, whom he is prepared to betray for the sake of revenge. Huang Gai has been punished and sent Kan Ze to propose that he should come over to our side. Only I still distrust the whole thing. Who will go over to the camp to find out the real truth?”

Then Jiang Gan spoke up, saying, “I failed in my mission the other day and am greatly mortified. I will risk my life again and, this time, I shall surely bring good news.”

Cao Cao approved of him as messenger and bade him start. Jiang Gan set out in a small craft and speedily arrived at the Three Gorges, landing near the naval camp. Then he sent to inform Zhou Yu.

Hearing who it was, Zhou Yu chuckled, saying, “Success depends upon this man.”

Then, Zhou Yu called Lu Su and told him to call Pang Tong to come and do certain things for him.

This Pang Tong was from Xiangyang, and he had gone to the east of the river to get away from the strife. Lu Su had recommended him to Zhou Yu, but he had not yet presented himself.

When Zhou Yu sent Lu Su to ask what scheme of attack he would recommend against Cao Cao, Pang Tong had said to Lu Su, “You must use fire against him. But the river is wide, and if one ship is set on fire, the

others will scatter unless they are fastened together so that they must remain in one place. That is the one road to success.”

Lu Su took this message to Zhou Yu, who pondered over it and then said, “The only person who can manage this is Pang Tong himself.”

“Cao Cao is very wily,” said Lu Su. “How can Pang Tong go?”

So Zhou Yu was sad and undecided. He could think of no method till suddenly the means presented itself in the arrival of Jiang Gan.

Presently, Zhou Yu at once sent instructions to Pang Tong on how to act, and then sat himself in his tent to await his visitor, Jiang Gan.

But the visitor became ill at ease and suspicious when he saw that his old student-friend did not come to welcome him, and he took the precaution of sending his boat into a retired spot to be made fast before he went to the general’s tent.

When Zhou Yu saw Jiang Gan, Zhou Yu put on an angry face and said, “My friend, why did you treat me so badly?”

Jiang Gan laughed and said, “I remembered the old days when we were as brothers, and I came expressly to pour out my heart to you. Why do you say I treated you badly?”

“You came to persuade me to betray my master, which I would never do unless the sea dried up and the rocks perished. Remembering the old times, I filled you with wine and kept you to sleep with me. And you, you plundered my private letters and stole away with not a word of farewell. You betrayed me to Cao Cao and caused the deaths of my two friends on the other side and so caused all my plans to miscarry. Now what have you come for? Certainly, it is not out of kindness to me. I would cut you in two, but I still care for our old friendship. I would send you back again, but within a day or two, I shall attack that rebel. If I let you stay in my camp,

my plans will leak out. So I am going to tell my attendants to conduct you to a certain retired hut in the Western Hills and keep you there till I shall have won the victory. Then, I will send you back again.”

Jiang Gan tried to say something, but Zhou Yu would not listen. He turned his back and went into the recesses of his tent. The attendants led the visitor off, set him on a horse, and took him away over the hills to the small hut, leaving two soldiers to look after him.

When Jiang Gan found himself in the lonely hut, he was very depressed and had no desire to eat or sleep. But one night, when the stars were very brilliant, he strolled out to enjoy them. Presently, he came to the rear of his lonely habitation and heard nearby someone crooning over a book. Approaching with stealthy steps, he saw a tiny cabin half-hidden in a cliff whence a slender beam or two of light stole out between the rafters. He went nearer and, peeping in, saw a man reading by the light of a lamp near which hung a sword; the book was Sun Zi’s classic, *The Art of War*.

This is no common person, thought Jiang Gan, and so he knocked at the door.

The door was opened by the reader, who bade him welcome with cultivated and refined ceremony. Jiang Gan inquired his name.

The host replied, “I am Pang Tong.”

“Then you are surely the Master known as Young Phoenix, are you not?”

“Yes, I am he.”

“How often have I heard you talked about! You are famous. But why are you hidden away in this spot?”

“That fellow Zhou Yu is too conceited to allow that anyone else has any talent, and so I live here quietly. But who are you, Sir?”

“I am Jiang Gan.”

Then, Pang Tong made him welcome and led him in, and the two sat down to talk.

“With your gifts, you would succeed anywhere,” said Jiang Gan. “If you would enter Cao Cao’s service, I would recommend you to him.”

“I have long desired to get away from here. And if you, Sir, will present me, there is no time like the present. If Zhou Yu heard of my wish, he would kill me, I am sure.”

So without more ado, they made their way down the hill to the water’s edge to seek the boat in which Jiang Gan had come. They embarked, and rowing swiftly, they soon reached the northern shore. At the central camp, Jiang Gan landed and went to seek Cao Cao, to whom he related the story of the discovery of his new acquaintance.

When Cao Cao heard that the newcomer was Master Young Phoenix, Cao Cao went to meet him personally and made him very welcome, and soon, they sat down to talk on friendly terms.

Cao Cao said, “And so Zhou Yu, in his youth, is conceited and annoys his officers and rejects all their advice: I know that. But your fame has been long known to me, and now that you have been gracious enough to turn my way, I pray you not to be thrifty of your advice.”

“I, too, know well that you are a model of military strategy,” said Pang Tong, “but I should like to have one look at your disposition.”

So horses were brought, and the two rode out to the lines, host and visitor on equal terms, side by side. They ascended a hill whence they had a wide view of the land base.

After looking all round, Pang Tong remarked, "Wu Qi the Great General, come to life again, could not do better, nor Sun Zi the Famed Strategist if he reappeared! All accords with the precepts. The camp is beside the hills and is flanked by a forest. The front and rear are within sight of each other. Gates of egress and ingress are provided, and the roads of advance and retirement are bent and broken."

"Master, I entreat you not to overpraise me, but to advise me where I can make further improvements," said Cao Cao.

Then the two men rode down to the naval camp, where twenty-four gates were arranged facing south. The cruisers and the battleships were all lined up so as to protect the lighter crafts which lay inside. There were channels to pass to and fro and fixed anchorages and stations.

Pang Tong, surveying all this, smiled, saying, "Sir Prime Minister, if this is your method of warfare, you enjoy no empty reputation." Then, pointing to the southern shore, he went on, "Zhou Yu! Zhou Yu! You are finished. You will have to die."

Cao Cao was mightily pleased. They rode back to the chief tent, and wine was brought. They discussed military matters, and Pang Tong held forth at length. Remarks and comments flowed freely between the two, and Cao Cao formed an exalted opinion of his new adherent's abilities and treated him with the greatest honor.

By and by, the guest seemed to have succumbed to the influence of many cups and said, "Have you any capable medical people in your army?"

"What are they for, Master?" said Cao Cao.

"There is a lot of illness among the marines, and you ought to find some remedy."

The fact was that, at this time, Cao Cao's men were suffering from the climate. Many were vomiting and not a few had died. It was a source of great anxiety to him, and when the newcomer suddenly mentioned it, of course he had to ask advice.

Pang Tong said, "Your marine force is excellent, but there is just one defect; it is not quite perfect."

Cao Cao pressed him to say where the imperfection lay.

"I have a plan to overcome the ailment of the soldiers so that no one shall be sick and all fit for service."

"What is this excellent scheme?" said Cao Cao.

"The river is wide, and the tides ebb and flow. The winds and waves are never at rest. Your troops from the north are unused to ships, and the motion makes them ill. If your ships, large and small, were classed and divided into thirties, or fifties, and joined up stem to stem by iron chains and boards spread across them, to say nothing of soldiers being able to pass from one to the next, even horses could move about on them. If this were done, then there would be no fear of the wind and the waves and the rising and falling tides."

Coming down from his seat, Cao Cao thanked his guest, saying, "I could never defeat the Land of the South without this scheme of yours."

"It is only my idea," said Pang Tong. "It is for you to decide about it."

Orders were then issued to call up all the blacksmiths and set them to work, night and day, forging iron chains and great bolts to lock together the ships. And the soldiers rejoiced when they heard of the plan.



In the Red Cliffs' fight they used the flame,

The weapon here will be the same.
By Pang Tong's advice the ships were chained,
Else Zhou Yu had not that battle gained.



Pang Tong further told Cao Cao, "I know many bold people on the other side who hate Zhou Yu. If I may use my little tongue in your service, I can induce them to come over to you. If Zhou Yu be left alone, you can certainly take him captive. And Liu Bei is of no account."

"Certainly, if you could render me so great a service, I would memorialize the Throne and obtain for you one of the highest offices," said Cao Cao.

"I am not doing this for the sake of wealth or honors, but from a desire to succor humankind. If you cross the river, I pray you be merciful."

"I am Heaven's means of doing right and could not bear to slay the people."

Pang Tong thanked him and begged for a document that would protect his own family.

Cao Cao asked, "Where do they live?"

"All are near the river bank."

And Cao Cao ordered a declaration of protection to be prepared. Having sealed it, he gave it to Pang Tong.

Pang Tong said, "You should attack as soon as I have gone, but do not let Zhou Yu doubt anything."

Cao Cao promised secrecy, and the wily traitor took his leave. Just as he was about to embark, he met a man in a Daoist robe, with a bamboo comb in his hair, who stopped him.

The man said, “You are very bold. Huang Gai is planning to use the ‘Personal Injury Ruse,’ and Kan Ze has presented the letter of pretended desertion. You have proffered the fatal scheme of chaining the ships together lest the flames may not completely destroy them. This sort of mischievous work may have been enough to deceive Cao Cao, but I saw it all.”

Pang Tong became helpless with fear, his viscera flown away, his spirit scattered.

By guileful means one may succeed,
The victims, too, find friends in need.

The next chapter will tell who the stranger was.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XI

CHAPTER 48

A BANQUET ON THE GREAT RIVER: CAO CAO SINGS A SONG; A BATTLE
ON WATER: NORTHERNERS FIGHT WITH CHAINED SHIPS.

In the last chapter, Pang Tong was brought up with a sudden shock when someone seized him and said of his scheme. Upon turning to look at the man, Pang Tong saw it was Xu Shu, an old friend, and his heart revived.

Looking around and seeing no one near, Pang Tong said, "It would be a pity if you upset my plan. The fate of the people of all the eighty-one southern counties is in your hands."

Xu Shu smiled, saying, "And what of the fate of these eight hundred thirty thousand soldiers and horses of the north?"

"Do you intend to wreck my scheme, Xu Shu?"

"I have never forgotten the kindness of Uncle Liu Bei, nor my oath to avenge the death of my mother at Cao Cao's hands. I have said I would never think out a plan for him. So am I likely to wreck yours now, brother? But I have followed Cao Cao's army thus far; after they shall have been defeated, good and bad will suffer alike, and how can I escape? Tell me how I can secure safety, and I sew up my lips and go away."

Pang Tong smiled, "If you are as high-minded as that, there is no great difficulty."

"Still, I wish you would instruct me."

So Pang Tong whispered something in his ear which seemed to please Xu Shu greatly, for he thanked him most cordially and took his leave. Then,

Pang Tong betook himself to his boat and left for the southern shore.

His friend gone, Xu Shu mischievously spread certain rumors in the camp, and next day were to be seen everywhere soldiers in small groups, some talking, others listening, heads together and ears stretched out, till the camps seemed to buzz.

Some of the officers went to Cao Cao and told him, “A rumor is running around the camps that Han Sui and Ma Teng are marching from Xiliang to attack the capital.”

This troubled Cao Cao, who called together his advisers to council. Said he, “The only anxiety I have felt in this expedition was about the possible doings of Han Sui and Ma Teng. Now, there is a rumor running among the soldiers, and though I know not whether it be true or false, it is necessary to be on one’s guard.”

At this point, Xu Shu said, “You have been kind enough to give me an office, Sir, and I have really done nothing in return. If I may have three thousand troops, I will march at once to San Pass and guard this entrance. If there be any pressing matter, I will report at once.”

“If you would do this, I should be quite at my ease. There are already troops beyond the Pass who will be under your command, and now I will give you three thousand cavalry and infantry units, and Zang Ba shall lead the van and march quickly.”

Xu Shu took leave of the Prime Minister and left in company with Zang Ba. This was Pang Tong’s scheme to secure the safety of Xu Shu.



A poem says:

Cao Cao marched south, but at his back
There rode the fear of rear attack.
Pang Tong's good counsel Xu Shu took,
And thus the fish escaped the hook.



Cao Cao's anxiety diminished after he had thus sent away Xu Shu. Then, he rode round all the camps, first the land forces and then the naval. He boarded one of the large ships and thereon set up his standard. The naval camps were arranged along two lines, and every ship carried a thousand bow- and crossbowmen.

While Cao Cao remained with the fleet, it occurred the full moon of the eleventh month of the thirteenth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 208). The sky was clear, there was no wind, and the river lay unruffled. He prepared a great banquet, with music, and thereto invited all his leaders. As evening drew on, the moon rose over the eastern hills in its immaculate beauty, and beneath it lay the broad belt of the river like a band of pure silk. It was a great assembly, and all the guests were clad in gorgeous silks and embroidered robes, and the arms of the fighting soldiers glittered in the moonlight. The officers, civil and military, were seated in their proper order of precedence.

The setting, too, was exquisite. The Southern Hills were outlined as in a picture, the boundaries of Chaisang lay in the east, the river showed west

as far as Xiakou, on the south lay the Fan Mountains, and on the north was the Black Forest. The view stretched wide on every side.

Cao Cao's heart was jubilant, and he harangued the assembly, saying, "My one aim since I enlisted my first small band of volunteers has been the removal of evil from the state, and I have sworn to cleanse the country and restore tranquility. Now, there is only left this Land of the South to withstand me. I am at the head of a hundred legions. I depend upon you, gentlemen, and have no doubt of my final success. After I have subdued the South Land, there will be no trouble in all the country. Then we shall enjoy wealth and honor and revel in peace."

They rose as a body and expressed their appreciation, saying, "We trust that you may soon report complete victory, and we shall all repose in the shade of your good fortune."

In his elation, Cao Cao bade the servants bring more wine, and they drank till late at night.

Warmed and mellowed, the host pointed to the south bank, saying, "Zhou Yu and Lu Su know not the appointed time. Heaven is aiding me, bringing upon them the misfortune of the desertion of their most trusted friends."

"O Prime Minister, say nothing of these things, lest they become known to the enemy," said Xun You.

But the Prime Minister only laughed. "You are all my trusty friends," said he, "both officers and humble attendants. Why should I refrain?" Pointing to Xiakou, he continued, "You do not reckon for much with your puny force, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang. How foolish of you to attempt to shake the Taishan Mountains!"

Then, turning to his officers, he said, "I am now fifty-four, and if I get the South Land, I shall have the wherewithal to rejoice. In the days of long ago, the Patriarch Duke Qiao in the south and I were great friends, and we came to an agreement on certain matters, for I knew his two daughters, Elder Qiao and Younger Qiao, were lovely beyond words. Then, by some means, they became wives to Sun Ce and Zhou Yu. But now, my palace of rest is built on the River Zhang, and victory over the South Land will mean that I marry these two fair women. I will put them in the Bronze Bird Tower, and they shall rejoice my declining years. My desires will then be completely attained."

He smiled in his anticipation.



Du Mu, a famous poet of the Tang Dynasty, in one poem says:

A broken halberd buried in the sand,
With deep rust eaten,
Loud tells of ancient battles on the strand,
When Cao Cao was beaten.
Had eastern winds Zhou Yu's plan refused to aid
And fan the blaze,
The two fair Qiaos, in the Bronze Bird's shade,
Would have been locked at spring age.



But suddenly, amid the merriment was heard the hoarse cry of a raven flying toward the south.

“Why does the raven thus cry in the night?” said Cao Cao to those about him.

“The moon is so bright that it thinks it is day,” said they, “and so it leaves its tree.”

Cao Cao laughed. By this time, he was quite intoxicated. He set up his spear in the prow of the ship and poured a libation into the river and then drank three brimming goblets.

As he lowered the spear, he said, “This is the spear that broke up the Yellow Scarves, captured Lu Bu, destroyed Yuan Shu, and subdued Yuan Shao, whose armies are now mine. In the north, it reached to Liaodong, and it stretched out over the whole south. It has never failed in its task. The present scene moves me to the depths, and I will sing a song in which you shall accompany me.”

And so he sang:

“When goblets are brimming then song is near birth,
But life is full short and has few days of mirth,
Life goes as the dew drops fly swiftly away,
Beneath the glance of the glowing hot ruler of day.
Man’s life may be spent in the noblest enterprise,
But sorrowful thoughts in his heart oft arise.
Let us wash clean away the sad thoughts that intrude,
With bumpers of wine such as Du Kang once brewed.
Gone is my day of youthful fire
And still ungained is my desire.
The deer feed on the level plain
And joyful call, then feed again.
My noble guests are gathered round.

The air is trilled with joyful sound.
Bright my future lies before me.
As the moonlight on this plain;
But I strive in vain to reach it.
When shall I my wish attain?
None can answer; and so sadness
Grips my inmost heart again.
Far north and south,
Wide east and west,
We safety seek;
Vain is the quest.
One's heart oft yearns
For conversation sweet.
And my heart burns
When old friends greet.
The stars are paled by the full moon's light,
The raven wings his southward flight.
And thrice he circles round a tree,
No place thereon to rest finds he.
They weary not the mountains of great height,
The waters deep of depth do not complain,
Duke Zhou no leisure found by day or night
Stern toil is his who would the empire gain."

The song made, they sang it with him and were all exceedingly merry, save one guest who suddenly said, "When the great army is on the point of battle and lives are about to be risked, why do you, O Prime Minister, speak such ill words?"

Cao Cao turned quickly toward the speaker, who was Liu Fu, Imperial Protector of Yangzhou. This Liu Fu sprang from Hefei. When first appointed to his post, he had gathered in the terrified and frightened people and restored order. He had founded schools and encouraged the people to till the land. He had long served under Cao Cao and rendered valuable service.

When Liu Fu spoke, Cao Cao dropped his spear to his level and said, "What ill-omened words did I use?"

"You spoke of the moon paling the stars and the raven flying southward without finding a resting place. These are ill-omened words."

"How dare you try to belittle my endeavor?" cried Cao Cao, very wrathful. And with that, he smote Liu Fu with his spear and slew him.

The assembly broke up, and the guests dispersed in fear and confusion.

Next day, when Cao Cao had recovered from his drunken bout, he was very grieved at what he had done. When the murdered man's son, Liu Xi, came to crave the body of his father for burial, Cao Cao wept and expressed his sorrow. "I am guilty of your father's death. I was drunk yesterday. I regret the deed exceedingly. Your father shall be interred with the honors of a minister of the highest rank."

Cao Cao sent an escort of soldiers to take the body to the homeland for burial.

A few days after, the two leaders of the naval force, Mao Jie and Yu Jin, came to say the ships were all connected together by chains as had been ordered, and all was now ready. They asked for the command to start.

Thereupon, the leaders of both land and naval forces were assembled on board a large ship in the center of the squadron to receive orders. The various armies and squadrons were distinguished by different flags: Mao Jie and Yu Jin led the central naval squadron with a yellow flag; Zhang He, the leading squadron, red flag; Lu Qian, the rear squadron, black flag; Wen Ping, the left squadron, blue flag; and Li Tong, the right squadron, white flag. On shore Xu Huang commanded the horsemen with red flag; Li Dian, the vanguard, black flag; Yue Jin, the left wing, blue flag; and Xiahou Yuan, the right wing, white flag. Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong were in reserve, and the general staff was under the leadership of Xu Chu and Zhang Liao. The other leaders were ordered to remain in camps but ready for action.

All being ready, the squadron drums beat the roll thrice, and the ships sailed out under a strong northwest wind on a trial cruise. When they got among the waves, they were found to be as steady and immovable as the dry land itself. The northern soldiers showed their delight at the absence of motion by capering and flourishing their weapons. The ships moved on, the squadrons keeping quite distinct. Fifty light cruisers sailed to and fro keeping order and urging progress.

Cao Cao watched his navy from the Command Terrace and was delighted with their evolutions and maneuvers. Surely, this meant complete victory. He ordered the recall, and the squadrons returned in perfect order to their base.

Then, Cao Cao went to his tent and summoned his advisers.

He said, "If Heaven had not been on my side, would I have gotten this excellent plan from the Young Phoenix? Now that the ships are attached firmly to each other, one may traverse the river as easily as walking on firm earth."

“The ships are firmly attached to each other,” said Cheng Yu, “but you should be prepared for an attack by fire so that they can scatter to avoid it.”

Cao Cao laughed. “You look a long way ahead,” said he, “but you see what cannot happen.”

“Cheng Yu speaks much to the point, my lord,” said Xun You. “Why do you laugh at him?”

Cao Cao said, “Anyone using fire depends upon the wind. This is now winter and only west winds blow. You will get neither east nor south winds. I am on the northwest, and the enemy is on the southeast bank. If they use fire, they will destroy themselves. I have nothing to fear. If it were the tenth moon, or early spring, I would provide against fire.”

“The Prime Minister is indeed wise,” said the others in chorus. “None can equal him.”

“With the northern troops unused to shipboard, I could never have crossed the river but for this chaining plan,” said Cao Cao.

Then he saw two of the secondary leaders stand up, and they said, “We are from the north, but we are also sailors. Pray give us a small squadron, and we will seize some of the enemy’s flags and drums for you that we may prove ourselves adepts on the water.”

The speakers were two men who had served under Yuan Shao, named Jiao Chu and Zhang Neng.

“I do not think naval work would suit you two, born and brought up in the north,” said Cao Cao. “The southern soldiers are thoroughly accustomed to ships. You should not regard your lives as a child’s plaything.”

They cried, “If we fail, treat us according to army laws!”

“The fighting ships are all chained together; there are only small, twenty-men boats free. They are unsuitable for fighting.”

“If we took large ships, where would be the wonder in what we will do? No! Give us a score of the small ships, and we will take half each and go straight to the enemy’s naval port. We will just seize a flag, slay a leader, and come home.”

“I will let you have the twenty ships and five hundred good, vigorous marines with long spears and stiff crossbows. Early tomorrow, the main fleet shall make a demonstration on the river, and I will also tell Wen Ping to support you with thirty ships.”

The two men retired, greatly elated.

Next morning, very early, food was prepared, and at the fifth watch, all was ready for a start. Then from the naval camp rolled out the drums, and the gongs clanged, as the ships moved out and took up their positions, the various flags fluttering in the morning breeze. The two intrepid leaders with their squadron of small scouting boats went down the lines and out into the stream.

Now a few days before the sound of Cao Cao’s drums were heard on the southern bank, Zhou Yu had watched the maneuvers of the northern fleet on the open river from the top of a hill till the fleet had gone in again. So when the sound of drums was again heard, all the southern army went up the hills to watch the northern fleet. All they saw was a squadron of small ships bounding over the waves.

As the northern fleet came nearer, the news was taken to Zhou Yu who called for volunteers to go out against them. Han Dang and Zhou Tai offered themselves. They were accepted, and orders were issued to the camps to remain ready for action but not to move till told.

Han Dang and Zhou Tai sailed out, each with a small squadron of five ships in line.

The two braggarts from the north, Jiao Chu and Zhang Neng, really only trusted to their boldness and luck. Their ships came down with the powerful strokes of the oars. As they neared, the two leaders put on their breastplates, gripped their spears, and took their stations in the prow of the leading ships of their divisions.

Jiao Chu's ship led, and as soon as he came near enough, his troops began to shoot at Han Dang, who fended off the arrows with his buckler. Jiao Chu twirled his long spear as he engaged his opponent. But at the first thrust, he was killed.

His comrade, Zhang Neng, with the other ships was coming up with great shouts, when Zhou Tai sailed up at an angle, and these two squadrons began shooting arrows at each other in clouds. Zhou Tai fended off the arrows with his shield and stood gripping his sword firmly till his ships came within a few spans of the enemy's ships, when he leaped across and cut down Zhang Neng. Zhang Neng's dead body fell into the water.

Then the battle became confused, and the attacking ships rowed hard to get away. The southerners pursued but soon came in sight of Wen Ping's supporting fleet. Once more, the ships engaged and the forces fought with each other.

Zhou Yu, with his officers, stood on the summit of a mountain and watched his own and the enemy ships out on the river. The flags and the ensigns were all in perfect order. Then he saw Wen Ping and his own fleets engaged in battle, and soon it was evident that the former was not a match for his own sailors. Wen Ping turned about to retire, Han Dang and Zhou Tai pursued. Zhou Yu, fearing lest his sailors should go too far, then hoisted the white flag of recall.

To his officers, Zhou Yu said, “The masts of the northern ships stand thick as reeds. Cao Cao himself is full of wiles. How can we destroy him?”

No one replied, for just then, the great yellow flag that flapped in the breeze in the middle of Cao Cao’s fleet suddenly fell over into the river.

Zhou Yu laughed. “That is a bad omen,” said he.

Then an extra violent blast of wind came by, and the waves rose high and beat upon the bank. A corner of his own flag flicked Zhou Yu on the cheek, and suddenly a thought flashed through his mind. Zhou Yu uttered a loud cry, staggered, and fell backward. They picked him up. There was blood upon his lips, and he was unconscious. Presently, however, he revived.

And once he laughed, then gave a cry,
This is hardly to ensure a victory.

Zhou Yu’s fate will appear as the story unfolds.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XI

CHAPTER 49

ON THE SEVEN-STARS ALTAR, ZHUGE LIANG SACRIFICES TO THE WINDS;
AT THE THREE GORGES, ZHOU YU UNLEASHES THE FIRE.

In the last chapter, Zhou Yu was seized with sudden illness as he watched the fleets of his enemy. He was borne to his tent, and his officers came in multitudes to inquire after him.

They looked at each other, saying, "What a pity our general should be taken ill, when Cao Cao's legions threaten so terribly! What would happen if Cao Cao attacked?"

Messengers with the evil tidings were sent to Sun Quan, while the physicians did their best for the invalid. Lu Su was particularly sad at the illness of his patron and went to see Zhuge Liang to talk it over.

"What do you make of it?" said Zhuge Liang.

"Good luck for Cao Cao; bad for us," said Lu Su.

"I could cure him," said Zhuge Liang, laughing.

"If you could, Wu would be very fortunate," said Lu Su.

Lu Su prayed Zhuge Liang to go to see the sick man. They went, and Lu Su entered first. Zhou Yu lay in bed, his head covered by a quilt.

"How are you, General?" said Lu Su.

"My heart pains me. Every now and again, I feel faint and dizzy."

"Have you taken any remedies?"

"My gorge rises at the thought. I could not."

“I saw Zhuge Liang just now, and he says he could heal you. He is just outside, and I will call him if you like.”

“Ask him to come in.” Zhou Yu bade his servants help him to a sitting position, and Zhuge Liang entered.

“I have not seen you for days,” said Zhuge Liang. “How could I guess that you were unwell?”

“How can anyone feel secure? We are constantly the playthings of luck, good or bad.”

“Yes. Heaven’s winds and clouds are not to be measured. No one can reckon their comings and goings, can they?”

Zhou Yu turned pale, and a low groan escaped him, while his visitor went on, “You feel depressed, do you not? As though troubles were piling up in your heart?”

“That is exactly how I feel,” said Zhou Yu.

“You need cooling medicine to dissipate this sense of oppression.”

“I have taken a cooling draught, but it has done no good.”

“You must get the humors into good order before the drugs will have any effect.”

Zhou Yu began to think Zhuge Liang knew what was really the matter and resolved to test him.

“What should be taken to produce a favorable temper?” said Zhou Yu.

“I know one means of producing a favorable temper,” replied Zhuge Liang.

“I wish you would tell me.”

Zhuce Liang got out writing materials, sent away the servants, and then wrote a few words:

“To defeat Cao Cao
You have to use fire;
All are in your wish,
But wind from the east.”

This he gave to the sick general, saying, “That is the origin of your illness.”

Zhou Yu read the words with great surprise, and it confirmed his secret opinion that Zhuge Liang really was rather more than human. He decided that the only course was to be open and tell him all.

So he said, “Since you know the cause of the disease, what do you recommend as treatment? The need of a remedy is very urgent.”

“I have no great talent,” said Zhuge Liang, “but I have had to do with humans of no ordinary gifts from whom I have received certain magical books called *Concealing Method*. I can call the winds and summon the rains. Since you need a southeast breeze, General, you must build an altar on the Southern Hills, the Altar of the Seven Stars. It must be nine spans high, with three steps, surrounded by a guard of one hundred and twenty humans bearing flags. On this altar I will work a spell to procure a strong southeast gale for three days and three nights. Do you approve?”

“Never mind three whole days,” said Zhou Yu. “One day of strong wind will serve my purpose. But it must be done at once and without delay.”

“I will sacrifice for a wind for three days from the twentieth day of the moon. Will that suit you?”

Zhou Yu was delighted and hastily rose from his couch to give the necessary orders. He commanded that five hundred men be sent to the mountains to build the altar, and he told off the guard of one hundred and twenty to bear the flags and be at the orders of Zhuge Liang.

Zhuge Liang took his leave, went forth, and rode off with Lu Su to the mountains, where they measured out the ground. He bade the soldiers build the altar of red earth from the southeast quarter. It was two hundred and forty spans in circuit, square in shape, and of three tiers, each of three spans, nine spans high in all.

On the lowest tier, he placed the flags of the twenty-eight “houses” of the heavens and four constellations: on the east seven, with blue flags; on the north seven, with black flags; on the west seven, with white flags; and on the south seven, with red flags.

Around the second tier, he placed sixty-four yellow flags, corresponding to the number of the diagrams of the *Book of Divination*, in eight groups of eight.

Four men were stationed on the highest platform, each wearing a Daoist headdress and a black silk robe embroidered with the phoenix and confined with wide sashes. They wore scarlet boots and square-cut skirts. On the left front stood a man supporting a tall pole bearing at its top a plume of light feathers to show by their least movement the wind’s first breath. On the right front was a man holding a tall pole whereon was a flag with the symbol of the seven stars to show the direction and force of the wind. On the left rear stood a man with a sword, and on the right rear a man with a censer.

Below the altar were forty-four men holding flags, umbrellas, spears, lances, yellow banners, white axes, red banderoles, and black ensigns. And these were spaced about the altar.

On the appointed day, Zhuge Liang, having chosen a propitious moment, bathed his body and purified himself. Then he robed himself as a

Daoist, loosened his locks, and approached the altar.

He bade Lu Su retire, saying, "Return to the camp and assist the General in setting out his forces. Should my prayers avail not, do not wonder."

So Lu Su left him. Then, Zhuge Liang commanded the guards on no account to absent themselves, to maintain strict silence, and to be reverent. Death would be the penalty of disobedience.

Next, with solemn steps he ascended the altar, faced the proper quarter, lighted the incense, and sprinkled the water in the basins. This done, he gazed into the heavens and prayed silently. The prayer ended, he descended and returned to his tent. After a brief rest, he allowed the soldiers by turns to go away to eat.

Thrice that day he ascended the altar and thrice descended, but there was no sign of the wind.

During that time, Zhou Yu, with Cheng Pu and Lu Su and other military officials on duty, sat waiting in the tent till the wished-for wind should blow and the attack could be launched. Messengers were also sent to Sun Quan to prepare to support the forward movement.

Huang Gai had his fire ships ready, twenty of them. The fore parts of the ships were thickly studded with large nails, and they were loaded with dry reeds, wood soaked in fish oil, and covered with sulfur, saltpeter, and other flammables. The ships were covered in with black-oiled cloth. In the prow of each was a black-dragon flag with indentations. A fighting ship was attached to the stern of each to propel it forward. All were ready and awaited orders to move.

Meanwhile, Cao Cao's two spies, Cai He and Cai Zhong, were being guarded carefully in an outer camp far from the riverbank and daily entertained with feasting. They were not allowed to know of the preparations. The watch was so close that not a trickle of information reached the prisoners.

Presently, while Zhou Yu was anxiously awaiting in his tent for the desired wind, a messenger came to say that Sun Quan had anchored at a place thirty miles from the camp, where he awaited news from the Commander-in-Chief.

Lu Su was sent to warn all the various commanders to be ready, the ships and their weapons, sails and oars, all for instant use, and to impress upon them the penalties of being caught unprepared. The soldiers were indeed ready for the fight and yearning for the fray.

But the sky remained obstinately clear, and as night drew nigh, no breath of air stirred.

"We have been cajoled," said Zhou Yu. "Indeed, what possibility is there of a southeast wind in midwinter?"

"Zhuge Liang would not use vain and deceitful words," replied Lu Su.

Towards the third watch, the sound of movement arose in the air. Soon, the flags fluttered out. And when the Commander-in-Chief went out to make sure, he saw they were flowing toward the northwest. In a very short time, the southeast wind was in full force.

Zhou Yu, however, was frightened at the power of the man whose help he had invoked. He said, "Really, the man has power over the heavens and authority over the earth. His methods are incalculable, beyond the ken of god or devil. He cannot be allowed to live to be a danger to our Land of the South. We must slay him soon to fend off later evils."

So Zhou Yu resolved to commit a crime to remove his dangerous rival.

He called two of the generals of his guard, Ding Feng and Xu Sheng, and said to them, "Each of you take a party of one hundred troops, one along the river, the other along the road, to the altar on the mountains. As soon as you get there, without asking questions or giving reasons, you are to seize and behead Zhuge Liang. Rich reward will be given when you bring his head back."

Xu Sheng and Ding Feng went off on their errand, the former leading dagger- and ax-men going as fast as oars could propel them along the river, the latter at the head of archers and bowmen on horseback. The southeast wind buffeted them as they went on their way.



High was raised the Seven-Stars Altar,
On it prayed the Sleeping Dragon
For an eastern wind, and straightway
Blew the wind. Had not the wizard
Exercised his mighty magic
Nought had Zhou Yu's skill availed.



Ding Feng first arrived. He saw the guards with their flags, dropped off his steed, and marched to the altar, sword in hand. But he found no Zhuge Liang.

When he asked the guards, they told him, saying, "He has just gone down."

Ding Feng ran down the hill to search. There he met his fellow, Xu Sheng, and they joined forces.

Presently, a simple soldier told them, saying, "The evening before a small, fast boat anchored there near a sand spit, and Zhuge Liang was seen to go on board. Then the boat went up river."

So Xu Sheng and Ding Feng divided their party into two, one to go by water, the other by land.

Xu Sheng bade his boatmen put on full sail and take every advantage of the wind. Before very long, he saw the fugitive's boat ahead and, when near enough, stood in the prow of his own and shouted, "Do not flee, O Instructor of the Army! The General requests your presence."

Zhugge Liang, who was seated in the stern of his boat, just laughed aloud, saying, "Return and tell the General to make good use of his soldiers. Tell him I am going upriver for a spell and will see him again another day."

"Pray wait a little while," cried Xu Sheng. "I have something most important to tell you!"

"I knew all about it, that Zhou Yu would not let me go and that he wanted to kill me. That is why Zhao Yun was waiting for me. You had better not approach nearer."

Seeing the other ship had no sail, Xu Sheng thought he would assuredly catch up with it and so maintained the pursuit.

Then, when he got too close, Zhao Yun fitted an arrow to his bowstring and, standing up in the stern of his boat, cried, "You know who I am, and I came expressly to escort the Directing Instructor. Why are you pursuing him? One arrow would kill you, only that would cause a breach of the peace between two houses. I will shoot and just give you a specimen of my skill."

With that, he shot, and the arrow whizzed overhead, cutting the rope that held up Xu Sheng's sail. Down came the sail, trailing in the water, and the boat swung round. Then, Zhao Yun's boat hoisted its sail, and the fair wind speedily carried it out of sight.

On the bank stood Ding Feng. He bade his comrade come to the shore and said, "Zhuge Liang is too clever for anyone; Zhao Yun is bravest of the brave. You remember what he did at Dangyang, at the Long Slope Bridge. All we can do is to return and report."

So they returned to camp and told their master about the preparations that Zhuge Liang had made to ensure safety. Zhou Yu was indeed puzzled at the depth of his rival's insight.

"I shall have no peace, day or night, while he lives," said Zhou Yu.

"At least wait till Cao Cao is done with," said Lu Su.

And Zhou Yu knew Lu Su spoke wisely.

Having summoned the leaders to receive orders, first, Zhou Yu gave orders to Gan Ning: "Take with you the false deserter Cai Zhong and his soldiers, and go along the south bank, showing the flags of Cao Cao, till you reach the Black Forest just opposite the enemy's main store of grain and forage. Then, you are to penetrate as deeply as possible into the enemy's lines and light a torch as a signal. Cai He is to be kept in camp for another purpose."

The next order was: "Taishi Ci is to lead two thousand troops as quickly as possible to Huangzhou and cut the enemy's communications with Hefei. When near the enemy, he is to give a signal. If he sees a red flag, he will know that our lord, Sun Quan, is at hand with reinforcements."

Gan Ning and Taishi Ci had the farthest to go and started first.

Then Lu Meng was sent into the Black Forest with three thousand troops as a support to Gan Ning, who was ordered to set fire to Cao Cao's depot. A fourth party of three thousand troops was led by Ling Tong to the borders of Yiling and attack as soon as the signal from the forest was seen. A fifth party of three thousand under Dong Xi went to Hanyang to fall upon the enemy along the River Han; their signal was a white flag, and a sixth division of three thousand commanded by Pan Zhang would support them.

When these six parties had gone off. Huang Gai got ready his fire ships and sent a soldier with a note to tell Cao Cao that he was coming over that evening. Four naval squadrons were told off to support Huang Gai.

The four squadrons, each of three hundred ships, were placed under four commanders: Han Dang, Zhou Tai, Jiang Qin, and Chen Wu. Twenty fire ships preceded each fleet. Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu went on board one of the large ships to direct the battle. Their guards were Ding Feng and Xu Sheng. Lu Su, Kan Ze, and the advisers were left to guard the camp. Cheng Pu was greatly impressed with Zhou Yu's ordering of the grand attack.

Then came a messenger bearing a mandate from Sun Quan making Lu Xun Leader of the Van. He was ordered to go to Qichun. Sun Quan himself would support Lu Xun. Zhou Yu also sent two command units, one to the Western Hills to make fire signals, and the other to the Southern Hills to hoist flags.

So, all being prepared, they waited for dusk.

Liu Bei was at Xiakou, anxiously awaiting the return of his adviser. Then appeared a fleet, led by Liu Qi, who had come to find out how matters were progressing.

Liu Bei sent to call him to the battle tower and said, "The southeast wind has begun to blow, and that Zhao Yun has gone to meet Zhuge Liang."

Not long after a single sail was seen coming up before the wind, and Liu Bei knew it was Zhuge Liang, the Directing Instructor of the Army.

So Liu Bei and Liu Qi went down to meet the boat. Soon, the vessel reached the shore, and Zhuge Liang and Zhao Yun disembarked.

Liu Bei was very glad, and after they had inquired after each other's well-being, Zhuge Liang said, "There is no time to tell of any other things now. Are the soldiers and ships ready?"

"They have long been ready," replied Liu Bei. "They only await you to direct how they are to be used."

The three then went to the tent and took their seats.

Zhuce Liang at once began to issue orders: "Zhao Yun, with three thousand troops is to cross the river and go to the Black Forest by the minor road. He will choose a dense jungle and prepare an ambush. Tonight, after the fourth watch, Cao Cao will hurry along that way. When half his troops have passed, the jungle is to be set ablaze. Cao Cao will not be wholly destroyed, but many will perish."

"There are two roads," said Zhao Yun. "One leads to the southern regions and the other to Jingzhou. I do not know by which he will come."

"The south road is too dangerous. Cao Cao will certainly pass along the Jingzhou road so that he may get away to Xuchang."

Then Zhao Yun went away.

Next, Zhuge Liang said to Zhang Fei, "You will take three thousand troops over the river to cut the road to Yiling. You will ambush in the Hulu Valley. Cao Cao, not daring to go to South Yiling, will go to North Yiling. Tomorrow, after the rain, he will halt to refresh his troops. As soon as the

smoke is seen to rise from their cooking fires, you will kindle the hillside. You will not capture Cao Cao, but you will render excellent service.”

So Zhang Fei left. Next was called Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, and Liu Feng. They were to take command of three squadrons and go along the river to collect beaten soldiers and their weapons.

The three left. Then, Zhuge Liang said to Liu Qi, “The country around Wuchang is very important, and I wish you to take command of your own troops and station them at strategic points. Cao Cao, being defeated, will flee thither, and you will capture him. But you are not to leave the city without the best of reasons.”

And Liu Qi took leave.

Then, Zhuge Liang said to Liu Bei, “I wish you to remain quietly and calmly in Fankou, in a high tower, to watch Zhou Yu work out his great scheme this night.”

All this time, Guan Yu had been silently waiting his turn, but Zhuge Liang said no word to him.

When Guan Yu could bear this no longer, he cried, “Since I first followed my Brother to battle many years ago, I have never been left behind. Now that great things are afoot, is there no work for me? What is meant by it?”

“You should not be surprised. I wanted you for service at a most important point, only that there was something standing in the way that prevented me from sending you,” said Zhuge Liang.

“What could stand in the way? I wish you would tell me.”

“You see Cao Cao was once very kind to you, and you cannot help feeling grateful. Now, when his soldiers have been beaten, he will have to

flee along the Huarong Road. If I sent you to guard it, you would have to let him pass. So I will not send you.”

“You are most considerate, Instructor. But though it is true that he treated me well, I slew two of his most redoubtable opponents, Yan Liang and Wen Chou, by way of repayment, beside raising a siege. If I happened upon him on this occasion, I should hardly let him go.”

“But what if you did?”

“You could deal with me by military rules.”

“Then put that in writing.”

So Guan Yu wrote a formal undertaking and gave the document to Zhuge Liang.

“What happens if Cao Cao does not pass that way?” said Guan Yu.

“I will give you a written engagement that he will pass.” Then Zhuge Liang continued, “On the hills by the Huarong Valley, you are to raise a heap of wood and grass to make a great column of smoke and mislead Cao Cao into coming.”

“If Cao Cao sees a smoke, he will suspect an ambush and will not come,” said Guan Yu.

“You are very simple,” said Zhuge Liang. “Do you not know more of war’s ruses than that? Cao Cao is an able leader, but you can deceive him this time. When he sees the smoke, he will take it as a subterfuge and risk going that way. But do not let your kindness of heart rule your conduct.”

Thus was his duty assigned Guan Yu, and he left, taking his adopted son Guan Ping, his general Zhou Cang, and five hundred swordsmen.

Said Liu Bei, “His sense of rectitude is very profound. I fear if Cao Cao should come that way, my Brother will let him pass.”

“I have consulted the stars lately, and the rebel Cao Cao is not fated to come to his end yet. I have purposely designed this manifestation of kindly feeling for Guan Yu to accomplish and so act handsomely.”

“Indeed, there are few such farseeing humans as you are,” said Liu Bei.

The two then went to Fankou, whence they might watch Zhou Yu’s evolutions. Sun Qian and Jian Yong were left on guard of Xiakou.

Cao Cao was in his great camp in conference with his advisers and awaiting the arrival of Huang Gai. The southeast wind was very strong that day, and Cheng Yu was insisting on the necessity for precaution.

But Cao Cao laughed, saying, “The Winter Solstice depends upon the sun and nothing else. There is sure to be a southeast wind at some one or other of its recurrences. I see nothing to wonder at.”

Just then they announced the arrival of a small boat from the other shore with a letter from Huang Gai. The bearer of the letter was brought in and presented it. Cao Cao read it:

“Zhou Yu has kept such strict watch that there has been no chance of escape. But now some grain is coming downriver, and I, Huang Gai, have been named as Escort Commander which will give me the opportunity I desire. I will slay one of the known generals and bring his head as an offering when I come. This evening at the third watch, if boats are seen with dragon-toothed flags, they will be the grain boats.”

This letter delighted Cao Cao, who with his officers, went to the naval camp and boarded a great ship to watch for the arrival of Huang Gai.

In the South Land, when evening fell, Zhou Yu sent for Cai He and bade the soldiers bind him.

The unhappy man protested, saying, "I have committed no crime!"

But Zhou Yu said, "What sort of a fellow are you, think you, to come and pretend to desert to my side? I need a small sacrifice for my flag, and your head will serve my purpose. So I am going to use it."

Cai He being at the end of his tether, unable to deny the charge, suddenly cried, "Two of your own side, Kan Ze and Gan Ning, are also in the plot!"

"Under my directions!" said Zhou Yu.

Cai He was exceedingly repentant and sad, but Zhou Yu bade them take Cai He to the riverbank where the black standard had been set up, and there, after the pouring of a libation and the burning of paper, Cai He was beheaded, his blood being a sacrifice to the flag.

This ceremony over, the ships started, and Huang Gai took his place on the third ship. He merely wore breast armor and carried a keen blade. On his flag were written four large characters: "Van Leader Huang Gai." With a fair wind, his fleet sailed toward the Red Cliffs.

The wind was strong, and the waves ran high. Cao Cao, in the midst of the central squadron, eagerly scanned the river, which rolled down under the bright moon like a silver serpent writhing in innumerable folds. Letting the wind blow full in his face, Cao Cao laughed aloud, for he was now to obtain his desire.

Then, a soldier pointing to the river said, "The whole south is one mass of sails, and they are coming up on the wind."

Cao Cao went to a higher point and gazed at the sails intently, and his officers told him that the flags were black and dragon-shaped, and indented, and among them there flew one very large banner on which was a name, "Huang Gai."

"That is my friend, the deserter!" said he joyfully. "Heaven is on my side today."

As the ships drew closer, Cheng Yu said, "Those ships are treacherous. Do not let them approach the camp."

"How know you that?" asked Cao Cao.

And Cheng Yu replied, "If they were laden with grain, they would lie deep in the water. But these are light and float easily. The southeast wind is very strong, and if they intend treachery, how can we defend ourselves?"

Cao Cao began to understand. Then he asked who would go out to stop the approaching fleet, and Wen Ping volunteered, saying, "I am well-used to the waters."

Thereupon, Wen Ping sprang into a small, light craft and sailed out, followed by ten cruisers which came at his signal.

Standing in the prow of his ship, Wen Ping called out to those advancing toward them, "You southern ships are not to approach! Such are the orders of the Prime Minister. Stop there in midstream!"

The soldiers all yelled to them to lower their sails. The shout had not died away when a bowstring twanged, and Wen Ping rolled down into the ship with an arrow in the left arm. Confusion reigned on his ship, and all the others hurried back to their camp.

When the ships were about a mile distant, Huang Gai waved his sword, and the leading ships broke forth into fire, which under the force of the strong wind, soon gained strength, and the ships became as fiery arrows. Soon the whole twenty dashed into the naval camp.

All Cao Cao's ships were gathered there, and as they were firmly chained together, not one could escape from the others and flee. There was a roar of bombs, and fireships came on from all sides at once. The face of the three rivers was speedily covered with fire which flew before the wind from one ship to another. It seemed as if the universe was filled with flame.

Cao Cao hastened toward the shore. Huang Gai, with a few troops at his back, leaped into a small boat, dashed through the fire, and sought Cao Cao. Cao Cao, seeing the imminence of the danger, made for the land. Zhang Liao got hold of a small boat into which he helped his master; none too soon, for the ship was burning. They got Cao Cao out of the thick of the fire and dashed for the bank.

Huang Gai, seeing a handsomely robed person get into a small boat, guessed it must be Cao Cao and pursued.

He drew very near, and he held his keen blade ready to strike, crying out, "You rebel! Do not flee. I am Huang Gai."

Cao Cao howled in the bitterness of his distress. Zhang Liao fitted an arrow to his bow and aimed at the pursuer, shooting at short range. The roaring of the gale and the flames kept Huang Gai from hearing the twang of the string, and he was wounded in the shoulder. He fell and rolled over into the water.

He fell in peril of water

When flames were high;
Ere cudgel bruises had faded,
An arrow struck.

Huang Gai's fate will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XI

CHAPTER 50

ZHUGE LIANG FORESEES THE HUARONG VALLEY EPISODE; GUAN YU
LIFTS HIS SABER TO RELEASE CAO CAO.

The last chapter closed with Huang Gai in the water wounded, Cao Cao rescued from immediate danger, and confusion rampant among the soldiers.

Pressing forward to attack the naval camp, Han Dang was told by his soldiers that someone was clinging to the rudder of his boat and shouting to him by his familiar name. Han Dang listened carefully and in the voice at once he recognized that Huang Gai was calling to him for help.

“That is my friend Huang Gai!” cried he, and they quickly pulled the wounded leader out of the water.

Then they saw Huang Gai was wounded, for the arrow still stuck. Han Dang bit out the shaft of the arrow but the point was deeply buried in the flesh. They hastily pulled off his wet garments and cut out the metal arrowhead with a dagger, tore up one of the flags, and bound up the wound. Then Han Dang gave Huang Gai his own fighting robe to put on and sent him off in a small boat back to camp.

Huang Gai’s escape from drowning must be taken as proof of his natural affinity for, or sympathy with, water. Although it was the period of great cold and he was heavy with armor when he fell into the river, yet he escaped with life.



In this great battle at the junction of the three rivers, the Three Gorges, when fire seemed to spread wide over all the surface of the water, when the earth quaked with the roar of battle, when land forces closed in on both wings and four battle squadrons advanced on the front, when the ferocity of fire answered the clash of weapons and weapons were aided by fire, under the thrusts of spears and the flights of arrows, burnt by fire and drowned by water, Cao Cao lost an incalculable number of troops. And a poet wrote:

When Wei and Wu together strove
For the mastery,
In the Red Cliffs fight the tall ships
Vanished from the sea,
For there the fierce flames, leaping high.
Burned them utterly.
So Zhou Yu for his liege lord
Got the victory.

And another poem runs:

The hills are high, the moon shines faint.
The waters stretch afar;
I sigh to think how oft this land
Has suffered stress of war;
And I recall how southerners
Shrank from the northern army's might,
And how a favoring eastern gale
Helped them to win the fight.



While fire was consuming the naval base of Cao Cao, Gan Ning made Cai Zhong guide him into the innermost recesses of Cao Cao's camp. Then Gan Ning slew Cai Zhong with one slash of his sword. After this, Gan Ning set fire to the jungle; at this signal, Lu Meng put fire to the grass in ten places near to each other. Then other fires were started, and the noise of battle was on all sides.

Cao Cao and Zhang Liao, with a small party of horsemen, fled through the burning forest. They could see no road in front; all seemed on fire. Presently, Mao Jie and Wen Ping, with a few more horsemen, joined them. Cao Cao bade the soldiers seek a way through.

Zhang Liao pointed out, saying, "The only suitable road is through the Black Forest."

And they took it.

They had gone but a short distance when they were overtaken by a small party of the enemy, and a voice cried, "Cao Cao, stop!"

It was Lu Meng, whose ensign soon appeared against the fiery background. Cao Cao urged his small party of fugitives forward, bidding Zhang Liao defend him from Lu Meng.

Soon after, Cao Cao saw the light of torches in front, and from a gorge, there rushed out another force. And the leader cried, "Ling Tong is here!"

Cao Cao was scared. His liver and gall both seemed torn from within.

But just then on his half-right, he saw another company approach and heard a cry, "Fear not, O Prime Minister, I am here to rescue you!"

The speaker was Xu Huang, and he attacked the pursuers and held them off.

A move to the north seemed to promise escape, but soon they saw a camp on a hilltop. Xu Huang went ahead to reconnoiter and found the officers in command were Cao Cao's Generals Ma Yan and Zhang Zi, who had once been in the service of Yuan Shao. They had three thousand northern soldiers in camp. They had seen the sky redden with the flames but knew not what was afoot and so dared make no move.

This turned out luckily for Cao Cao, who now found himself with a fresh force. He sent Ma Yan and Zhang Zi, with a thousand troops, to clear the road ahead while the others remained as guard. And he felt much more secure.

The two went forward, but before they had gone very far, they heard a shouting, and a party of soldiers came out, the leader of them shouting, "I am Gan Ning of Wu!"

Nothing daunted the two leaders, but the redoubtable Gan Ning cut down Ma Yan. And when his fellow warrior Zhang Zi set his spear and dashed forward, he, too, fell beneath a stroke from the fearsome sword of Gan Ning. Both leaders dead, the soldiers fled to give Cao Cao the bad news.

At this time, Cao Cao expected aid from Hefei, for he knew not that Sun Quan was barring the road. But when Sun Quan saw the fires and so knew that his soldiers had won the day, he ordered Lu Xun to give the answering signal. Taishi Ci, seeing this, came down, and his force joined up with that of Lu Xun, and they went against Cao Cao.

As for Cao Cao, he could only get away toward Yiling. On the road, Cao Cao fell in with Zhang He and ordered him to protect the retreat. Cao Cao pressed on as quickly as possible.

At the fifth watch, he was a long way from the glare, and he felt safer. He asked, "What is this place?"

They told him, "It is west of the Black Forest and north of Yidu."

Seeing the thickly crowded trees all about him, and the steep hills and narrow passes, Cao Cao threw up his head and laughed.

Those about him asked, "Why are you, Sir, so merry?"

And he said, "I am only laughing at the stupidity of Zhou Yu and the ignorance of Zhuge Liang. If they have only set an ambush there, as I would have done, why, there is no escape."

Cao Cao had scarcely finished his explanation when from both sides came a deafening roll of drums and flames sprang up to heaven. Cao Cao nearly fell off his horse, he was so startled.

And from the side dashed in a troop, with Zhao Yun leading, who cried, "I am Zhao Yun, and long have I been waiting here!"

Cao Cao ordered Xu Huang and Zhang He to engage this new opponent, and he himself rode off into the smoke and fire. Zhao Yun did not pursue; he only captured the banners, and Cao Cao escaped.

The faint light of dawn showed a great black cloud all around, for the southeast wind had not ceased. Suddenly began a heavy downpour of rain, wetting everyone to the skin, but still Cao Cao maintained his headlong flight, till the starved faces of the soldiers made a halt imperative. He told the men to forage in the nearby villages for grain and the means of making a fire. But when these had been found and they began to cook a meal, another pursuing party came along, and Cao Cao again was terrified.

However, these proved to be Li Dian and Xu Chu escorting some of his advisers whom he saw with joy.

When giving the order to advance again, Cao Cao asked, “What places lay ahead?”

They told him, “There are two roads. One is the highway to South Yiling, and the other a mountain road to North Yiling.”

“Which is the shorter way to Jiangling?” asked Cao Cao.

“The best way is to take the south road through Hulu Valley,” was the reply.

So Cao Cao gave orders to march that way. By the time Hulu Valley was reached, the soldiers were almost starving and could march no more; the horses, too, were worn out. Many had fallen by the roadside. A halt was then made, food was taken by force from the villagers, and as there were still some boilers left, they found a dry spot beside the hills where they could rest and cook. And there they began to prepare a meal, boiling grain, and roasting strips of horse flesh. Then, they took off their wet clothes and spread them to dry. The beasts, too, were unsaddled and turned out to graze.

Seated comfortably in a somewhat open spot, Cao Cao suddenly looked up and began to laugh loud and long.

His companions, remembering the sequel of his last laugh, said, “Not long since, Sir, you laughed at Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang. That resulted in the arrival of Zhao Yun and great loss of troops to us. Why do you now laugh?”

“I am laughing again at the ignorance of the same two men. If I were in their place, and conducting their campaign, I would have had an ambush here, just to meet us when we were tired out. Then, even if we escaped with

our lives, we should suffer very severely. They did not see this, and therefore, I am laughing at them.”

Even at that moment behind them rose a great yell. Thoroughly startled, Cao Cao threw aside his breastplate and leaped upon his horse. Most of the soldiers failed to catch theirs, and then fires sprang up on every side and filled the mouth of the valley. A force was arrayed before them and at the head was the man of ancient Yan, Zhang Fei, seated on his steed with his great spear leveled.

“Whither would you flee, O rebel?” shouted he.

The soldiers grew cold within at the sight of the terrible warrior. Xu Chu, mounted on a bare-backed horse, rode up to engage him, and Zhang Liao and Xu Huang galloped up to his aid. The three gathered about Zhang Fei, and a melee began, while Cao Cao made off at top speed. The other leaders set off after him, and Zhang Fei pursued. However, Cao Cao, by dint of hard riding, got away, and gradually, the pursuers were outdistanced. But many had received wounds.

As they were going, the soldiers said, “There are two roads before us. Which shall we take?”

“Which is the shorter?” asked Cao Cao.

“The high road is the more level, but it is fifteen miles longer than the byroad which goes through Huarong Valley. Only, the latter road is narrow and dangerous, full of pits and difficult.”

Cao Cao sent men up to the hilltops to look around.

They returned, saying, “There are several columns of smoke rising from the hills along the byroad. The high road seems quiet.”

Then Cao Cao bade them lead the way along the byroad.

“Where smoke arises there are surely soldiers,” remarked the officers. “Why go this way?”

“Because the *Book of War* says that the hollow is to be regarded as solid, and the solid as hollow. That fellow, Zhuge Liang, is very subtle and has sent people to make those fires so that we should not go that way. He has laid an ambush on the high road. I have made up my mind, and I will not fall a victim to his wiles.”

“O Prime Minister, your conclusions are most admirable. None other can equal you,” said the officers.

And the soldiers were sent along the byroad. They were very hungry and many almost too weak to travel. The horses, too, were spent. Some had been scorched by the flames, and they rode forward resting their heads on their whips. The wounded struggled on to the last of their strength. All were soaking wet and all were feeble. Their arms and accouterments were in a deplorable state, and more than half had been left upon the road they had traversed. Few of the horses had saddles or bridles, for in the confusion of pursuit they had been left behind. It was the time of greatest winter cold, and the suffering was indescribable.

Noticing that the leading party had stopped, Cao Cao sent to ask the reason.

The messenger returned, saying, “The rainwater collected in the pits makes the ground a mire, and the horses cannot move.”

Cao Cao raged. He said, “When soldiers come to hills, they cut a road; when they happen upon streams, they bridge them. Such a thing as mud cannot stay an army.”

So he ordered the weak and wounded to go to the rear and come on as they could, while the robust and able were to cut down trees and gather

herbage and reeds to fill up the holes. It was to be done without delay, or death would be the punishment of the disobedient or remiss.

So the soldiers dismounted and felled trees and cut bamboo, and they leveled the road. And because of the imminence and fear of pursuit, a party of one hundred under Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, and Xu Huang was told off to hasten the workers and slay any that idled.

The soldiers made their way along the shallower parts, but many fell, and cries of misery were heard the whole length of the way.

“What are you howling for?” cried Cao Cao. “The number of your days is fixed by fate. Anyone who howls shall be put to death.”

The remnant of the army, now divided into three, one to march slowly, a second to fill up the waterways and hollows, and a third to escort Cao Cao, gradually made its way over the precipitous road. When the going improved a little and the path was moderately level, Cao Cao turned to look at his following and saw he had barely three hundred soldiers, and these lacked clothing and armor and were tattered and disordered.

But he pressed on, and when the officers told him the horses were quite spent and must rest, he replied, “Press on to Jingzhou, and there we shall find repose.”

So they pressed on. But they had gone only one or two miles when Cao Cao flourished his whip and broke once again into loud laughter.

“What is there to laugh at?” asked the officers.

“People say those two, Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang, are able and crafty. I do not see it. They are a couple of incapables. If an ambush had been placed here, we should all be prisoners.”

Cao Cao had not finished this speech when the explosion of a bomb broke the silence, and a company of five hundred troops with swords in

their hands appeared and barred the way. The leader was Guan Yu, holding his Green-Dragon Saber, striding the Red Hare. At this sight, the spirits of Cao Cao's soldiers left them, and they gazed into each others' faces in panic.

"Now, we have but one course," said Cao Cao. "We must fight to the death!"

"How can we?" said the officers. "Though the leaders may have some strength left, the horses are spent."

Cheng Yu said, "I have always heard that Guan Yu is haughty to the proud but kindly to the humble; he despises the strong, but is gentle with the weak. He discriminates between love and hate and is always righteous and true. You, O Prime Minister, have shown him kindness in the past. If you will remind him of that, we shall escape this evil."

Cao Cao agreed to try. He rode out to the front, bowed low and said, "General, I trust you have enjoyed good health."

"I had orders to await you, O Prime Minister," replied Guan Yu, bowing in return, "and I have been expecting you these many days."

"You see before you one Cao Cao—defeated and weak. I have reached a sad pass, and I trust you, O General, will not forget the kindness of former days."

"Though indeed you were kind to me in those days, I slew your enemies for you and relieved the Siege of Baima. As to the business of today, I cannot allow private feelings to outweigh public duty."

"Do you remember my six generals, slain at the five passes? The noble person values righteousness. You are well-versed in the histories and must recall the action of Yu Gong, the archer, when he released his master Zi Zhuo, for he determined not to use Zi Zhuo's teachings to kill Zi Zhuo."

Guan Yu was indeed a very mountain of goodness and could not forget the great kindness he had received at Cao Cao's hands, and the magnanimity Cao Cao had shown over the deeds at the five passes. He saw the desperate straits to which his benefactor was reduced, and tears were very near to the eyes of both. He could not press Cao Cao hard.

He pulled at the bridle of his steed and turned away saying to his followers, "Break up the formation!"

From this, it was evident that his design was to release Cao Cao, who then went on with his officers. When Guan Yu turned to look back, they had all passed. He uttered a great shout, and Cao Cao's soldiers jumped off their horses and knelt on the ground, crying for mercy. But he also had pity for them. Then Zhang Liao, whom he knew well, came along and was allowed to go free also.



Cao Cao, his army lost, fled to the Huarong Valley;
There in the throat of the gorge met he Guan Yu.
Grateful was Guan Yu, and mindful of former
 kindness,
Wherefore slipped he the bolt and freed the
 imprisoned dragon.



Having escaped this danger, Cao Cao hastened to get out of the valley. As the throat opened out, he glanced behind him and saw only forty-seven horsemen. As evening fell, they reached Jiangling, and they came upon an army that they took to be more enemies.

Cao Cao thought the end had surely come, but to his delight they were his own soldiers, and he regained all his confidence.

Cao Ren, who was the leader, said, "I heard of your misfortunes, my lord, but I was afraid to venture far from my charge, else I would have met you before."

"I thought I would never see you again," said Cao Cao.

The fugitives found repose in the city, where Zhang Liao soon joined them. He also praised the magnanimity of Guan Yu.

When Cao Cao mustered the miserable remnant of his officers, he found nearly all were wounded, and he bade them rest. Cao Ren poured the wine of consolation whereby his master might forget his sorrows.

As Cao Cao drank among his familiars, he became exceedingly sad.

Wherefore they said, "O Prime Minister, when you were in the cave of the tiger and trying to escape, you showed no sign of sorrow. Now that you are safe in a city, where you have food and the horses have forage, where all you have to do is to prepare for revenge, suddenly you lose heart and grieve. Why thus?"

Replied Cao Cao, "I am thinking of my friend Guo Jia: had he been alive, he would not have let me suffer this loss." He beat his breast and wept, saying, "Alas for Guo Jia! I grieve for Guo Jia! I sorrow for Guo Jia!"

The reproach shamed the advisers, who were silent.

Next day, Cao Cao called Cao Ren and said, "I am going to the capital to prepare another army for revenge. You are to guard this region and, in case of necessity, I leave with you a sealed plan. You are only to open the cover when hard-pressed, and then you are to act as directed. The South Land will not dare to look this way."

"Who is to guard Hefei and Xiangyang?"

“Jingzhou is particularly your care, and Xiahou Dun is to hold Xiangyang. As Hefei is most important, I am sending Zhang Liao thither with the good aids of Li Dian and Yue Jin. If you get into difficulties, send at once to tell me.”

Having made these dispositions, Cao Cao set off at once with a few followers. He took with him the officers who had come over to his side when Jingzhou fell into his hands.

Cao Ren placed Cao Hong in charge of Yiling and Jiangling.

After having allowed the escape of Cao Cao, Guan Yu found his way back to headquarters. By this time, the other detachments had returned bringing spoil of horses and weapons and supplies of all kinds. Only Guan Yu came back empty-handed.

When he arrived, Zhuge Liang was with his Brother, congratulating him on his success. When Guan Yu was announced, Zhuge Liang got up and went to welcome him, bearing a cup of wine.

“Joy! O General,” said Zhuge Liang. “You have done a deed that overtops the world. You have removed the empire’s worst foe and ought to have been met at a distance and felicitated.”

Guan Yu muttered inaudibly, and Zhuge Liang continued, “I hope it is not because we have omitted to welcome you on the road that you seem sad.”

Turning to those about him, Zhuge Liang said, “Why did you not tell us Guan Yu was coming?”

“I am here to ask for death,” said Guan Yu.

“Surely Cao Cao came through the valley?”

“Yes, he came that way. But I could not help it: I let him go.”

“Then whom have you captured?”

“No one.”

“Then you remembered the old kindness of Cao Cao and so allowed him to escape. But your acceptance of the task with its conditions is here. You will have to suffer the penalty.”

Zhuge Liang called in the lictors and told them to take away Guan Yu and put him to death.

Guan Yu risked life when he spared
Cao Cao in direst need,
And age-long admiration gained
For such a kindly deed.

What actually befell will be seen in the next chapter.



END OF ACT XI

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XII:

A GAME OF CONQUEST: THE JINGZHOU CAMPAIGN

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XII

CHAPTER 51

CAO REN WITHSTANDS THE SOUTH LAND; ZHUGE LIANG ANGERS ZHOU YU.

Guan Yu would have died there but for his elder Brother, who said to Zhuge Liang, "We Three pledged ourselves to live and die together. Although my Brother Guan Yu has offended, I cannot bear to break our Oath. I hope you will only record this against him and let him atone later for the fault by some specially meritorious service."

So the sentence was remitted.

In the meantime, Zhou Yu mustered his officers and called over his soldiers, noted the special services of each, and sent full reports to his master. The soldiers who had surrendered were all transported across the river. All this done, they spread the feast of victory.

The next step was to attack and capture Nanjun. The van of the army camped on the riverbank. There were five camps, and the Commander-in-Chief's tent was in the center. He summoned his officers to a council.

At this moment, Sun Qian arrived with congratulations from Liu Bei.

Zhou Yu received him and, having saluted in proper form, Sun Qian said, "My lord sent me on this special mission to felicitate the General on his great virtue and offer some unworthy gifts."

"Where is Liu Bei?" asked Zhou Yu.

“He is now encamped at Youkou, the mouth of River You.”

“Is Zhuge Liang there?” asked Zhou Yu, taken aback.

“Both are there,” said Sun Qian.

“Then return quickly, and I will come in person to thank them.”

The presents handed over, Sun Qian was sent back forthwith to his own camp. Then, Lu Su asked Zhou Yu why he had started when he heard where Liu Bei was camped.

“Because,” replied Zhou Yu, “camping at the mouth of River You means that he has the intention of taking Nanjun. Having spent much military energy and spared no expenditure, we thought the territory would fall to us easily. Those others are opposed to us, and they wish to take advantage of what we have already accomplished. However, they must remember that I am not dead yet.”

“How can you prevent them?” asked Lu Su.

“I will go myself and speak with them. If all goes well, then let it be so. In case it does not, then I shall immediately settle up with Liu Bei without waiting for Nanjun to be taken.”

“I should like to accompany you,” said Lu Su.

The commander and his adviser started, taking with them a guard of three thousand light horses. Having arrived at Youkou, they sought out Sun Qian, who, in turn, went in to see Liu Bei and told him Zhou Yu had come to render thanks.

“Why has he come?” asked Liu Bei of his Directing Instructor.

“He is not likely to come out of simple politeness. Surely he has come in connection with Nanjun.”

“But if he brings an army, can we stand against it?” asked Liu Bei.

“When he comes, you may reply thus and thus...”

They drew up warships in the river and ranged soldiers upon the bank. When the arrival of Zhou Yu was formally announced, Zhao Yun, with some horsemen, went to welcome him. When Zhou Yu saw what bold soldiers they looked, he began to feel uncomfortable, but he went on his way. Being met at the camp gates by Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang, he was taken into the chief tent, where the ceremonies were performed and preparations for a banquet had been made.

Presently, Liu Bei raised his cup in felicitation on the recent victory gained by his guest. The banquet proceeded.

After a few more courses, Zhou Yu said, "Of course you are camped here with no other idea than to take Nanjun?"

Liu Bei said, "We heard you were going to take the place and came to assist. Should you not take it, then we will occupy it."

Zhou Yu laughed, saying, "We of the South Land have long wished for this territory. Now that it is within our grasp, we naturally shall take it."

Liu Bei said, "There is always some uncertainty. Cao Cao left Cao Ren to guard the region, and you may be certain that there is good strategy behind Cao Ren, to say nothing of his boldness as a warrior. I fear you may not get it."

"Well, if we do not take it, then, Sir, you may have it," said Zhou Yu.

"Here are witnesses to your words," said Liu Bei, naming Lu Su, Zhuge Liang, and those at table. "I hope you will never regret what you have just said."

Lu Su stammered and seemed unwilling to be cited as one of the witnesses, but Zhou Yu said, "When the word of a noble person has gone forth, it is ended. He never regrets."

“This speech of yours, Sir, is very generous,” interjected Zhuge Liang. “The South Land shall try first. But if the place does not fall, there is no reason why my lord should not capture it.”

The two visitors then took their leave and rode away.

As soon as they had left, Liu Bei turned to Zhuge Liang and said, “O Master, you bade me thus reply to Zhou Yu. But though I did so, I have turned it over and over in my mind without finding any reason in what I said. I am alone and weak, without a single foot of land to call my own. I desired to get possession of Nanjun that I might have, at least, a temporary shelter, yet I have said that Zhou Yu may attack it first. If it falls to the South Land, how can I get possession?”

Zhuce Liang laughed and replied, “First, I advised you to attack Jingzhou, but you would not listen. Do you remember?”

“But it belonged to Liu Biao, and I could not bear to attack it then. Now that it belongs to Cao Cao, I might do so.”

“Do not be overeager,” replied the adviser. “Let Zhou Yu go and attack it. Some day, my lord, I shall make you sit in the high place thereof.”

“But what design have you?”

“So and so...,” said Zhuge Liang, whispering.

Liu Bei was satisfied with the reply, and only strengthened his position at Youkou.

In the meantime, Zhou Yu and Lu Su returned to their own camp, and the latter said, “Why did you tell Liu Bei that he might attack Nanjun?”

“I can take it with a flick of my finger,” replied Zhou Yu, “but I just manifested a little pretended kindness.”

Then he inquired among his officers for a volunteer to attack the city. Jiang Qin offered himself, and was put in command of the vanguard, with Xu Sheng and Ding Feng as helpers. He was given five thousand veterans, and they moved across the river. Zhou Yu promised to follow with supports.

On the other side, Cao Ren ordered Cao Hong to guard Yiling and so hold one corner of an ox-horn defense.

When the news came that the South Land’s force had crossed the River Han, Cao Ren said, “We will defend and not offer battle.”

But General Niu Jin said impetuously, “To let the enemy approach the walls and not offer battle is timidity. Our troops, lately worsted, need heartening and must show their mettle. Let me have five hundred veterans, and I will fight to a finish.”

Cao Ren could not withstand this offer, and so the five hundred went out of the city.

At once, Ding Feng came to challenge the leader, and they fought a few bouts. Then Ding Feng pretended to be defeated, gave up the fight, and retreated into his own lines. Niu Jin followed him hard. When he had gotten within the South Land’s formation, at a signal from Ding Feng, the army closed round and Niu Jin was surrounded. He pushed right and left, but could find no way out.

Seeing Niu Jin in peril, Cao Ren, who had watched the fight from the wall, donned his armor and came out of the city at the head of his own bold company of horsemen and burst in among the forces of the South Land to

try to rescue his colleague. Beating back Xu Sheng, Cao Ren fought his way in and presently rescued Niu Jin.

However, having gotten out, Cao Ren saw several scores of horsemen still in the middle, unable to make their way out, whereupon he turned again to the battle and dashed in to their rescue. This time, he met Jiang Qin, on whom Cao Ren and Niu Jin made a violent attack. Then his brother Cao Chun came up with support, and the great battle ended in a defeat for the troops of the South Land.

So Cao Ren went back the victor, while the unhappy Jiang Qin returned to report his failure. Zhou Yu was very angry and would have put to death his hapless subordinate but for the intervention of the other officers. Then Zhou Yu prepared for another attack, where he himself would lead.

But Gan Ning said, "General, do not be in too great haste. Let me go first and attack Yiling, the supporting angle of the ox-horn formation. After that, the conquest of Nanjun will be easy."

Zhou Yu accepted the plan, and Gan Ning, with three thousand troops, went to attack Yiling.

When news of the approaching army reached him, Cao Ren called to his side Chen Jiao, who said, "If Yiling be lost, then Nanjun is lost too. So help must be sent quickly."

Thereupon, Cao Chun and Niu Jin were sent by secret ways to the aid of Cao Hong. Cao Chun sent a messenger to the city to ask that they cause a

diversion by a sortie at the time the reinforcements should arrive.

So when Gan Ning drew near, Cao Hong went out to meet and engage him. They fought a score of rounds, but Cao Hong was overcome at last, and Gan Ning took the city. However, as evening fell, the reinforcements under Cao Chun and Niu Jin came up, and the captor was surrounded in the city he had taken. The scouts went off immediately to tell Zhou Yu of this sudden change of affairs, which greatly alarmed him.

“Let us hasten to his rescue,” said Cheng Pu.

“Our place is of the greatest importance,” said Zhou Yu, “and I am afraid to leave it undefended lest Cao Ren should attack.”

“But Gan Ning is one of our finest leaders and must be rescued,” said Lu Meng.

“I should like to go myself to his aid, but whom can I leave here in my place?” said Zhou Yu.

“Leave Ling Tong here,” said Lu Meng. “I will push on ahead, and you can protect my advance. In less than ten days, we shall be singing the paean of victory.”

“Are you willing?” said Zhou Yu to the man who was to act for him.

Ling Tong said, “If the ten-day period is not exceeded, I may be able to carry on for that time. I am unequal to more than that.”

Ling Tong’s consent pleased Zhou Yu, who started at once, leaving ten thousand troops for the defense of the camp.

Lu Meng said to his chief, “South of Yiling is a little-used road that may prove very useful in an attack on Nanjun. Let us send a party to fell trees and barricade this road so that horses cannot pass. In case of defeat, the defeated will take this road and will be compelled to abandon their horses, which we shall capture.”

Zhou Yu approved, and the men set out. When the main army drew near Yiling, Zhou Yu asked who would try to break through the besiegers, and Zhou Tai offered himself. He girded on his sword, mounted his steed, and burst straight into Cao Hong's army. He got through to the city wall.

From the city wall, Gan Ning saw the approach of his friend Zhou Tai and went out to welcome him. Zhou Tai told him the Commander-in-Chief was on the way to his relief, and Gan Ning at once bade the defenders prepare from within to support the attack of the rescuers.

When the news of the approach of Zhou Yu had reached Yiling, Cao Hong, Cao Chun, and Niu Jin had sent to tell Cao Ren, who was at Nanjun, and at the same time, they prepared to repel the assailants.

As the army of the South Land came near, they at once attacked. Simultaneously, Gan Ning and Zhou Tai went out to attack on two sides, and the troops of Cao Hong were thrown into confusion. The soldiers of the South Land fell on lustily, and the three leaders all fled by a byroad, but finding the way barred with felled trees and other obstacles, they had to abandon their horses and go afoot. In this way, the troops of the South Land gained some five hundred steeds.

Zhou Yu, pressing on as quickly as possible toward Nanjun, came upon Cao Ren and his army marching to save Yiling. The two armies engaged and fought a battle which lasted till late in the evening. Then both drew off, and Cao Ren withdrew into the city.

During the night, he called his officers to a council.

Said Cao Hong, "The loss of Yiling has brought us to a dangerous pass. Now it seems the time to open the guide-letter of the Prime Minister,

and see what plans he arranged for our salvation in this peril.”

“You but say what I think,” replied Cao Ren.

Whereupon, he tore open the guide-letter and read it. His face lighted up with joy, and he at once issued orders to have the morning meal prepared at the fifth watch. At daylight, the whole army moved out of the city through three gates, but they left a semblance of occupation in the shape of banners on the walls.

Zhou Yu went up to the tower of observation and looked over the city. He saw that the flags along the battlements had no guards behind them, and he noticed that all troops carried bundles at their waists behind so that they were ready for a long march.

Thought Zhou Yu to himself, *Cao Ren must be prepared for a long march.*

So Zhou Yu went down from the tower and sent out an order for two wings of the army to be ready. One of these was to attack, and in case of its success, the other was to pursue at full speed till the clanging of the gongs should call them to return. He took command of the leading force in person, and Cheng Pu commanded the other. Thus they advanced to attack the city.

The armies being arrayed facing each other, the drums rolled out across the plain. Cao Hong rode forth and challenged, and Zhou Yu, from his place by the standard, bade Han Dang respond. The two champions fought nearly two score bouts, and then Cao Hong fled. Thereupon, Cao Ren came out to help him, and Zhou Tai rode out at full speed to meet him. These two exchanged a half-score passes and then Cao Ren tied.

Cao Ren’s army fell into confusion. Thereupon, Zhou Yu gave the signal for the advance of both his wings, and the forces of Cao Ren were sore-smitten and defeated. Zhou Yu pursued to the city wall, but Cao Ren’s

troops did not enter the city. Instead, they went away northwest. Han Dang and Zhou Tai pressed them hard.

Zhou Yu, seeing the city gates standing wide open and no guards upon the walls, ordered the raiding of the city. A few score horsemen rode in first, Zhou Yu following and whipping his steed. As he galloped into the enclosure around the gate, Chen Jiao stood on the defense tower. When he saw Zhou Yu enter, in his heart he applauded the godlike perspicacity of the Prime Minister Cao Cao.

Then was heard the clap-clap of a watchman's rattle. At this signal, the archers and crossbowmen let fly, and arrows and bolts flew forth in a sudden, fierce shower, while those who had won their way to the van of the inrush went headlong into a deep trench. Zhou Yu managed to pull up in time, but turning to escape, he was wounded in the left side and fell to the ground. Niu Jin rushed out from the city to capture the chief, but Xu Sheng and Ding Feng, at the risk of their lives, got him away safely.

Then the troops of Cao Ren dashed out of the city and wrought confusion among the troops of the South Land, who trampled each other down; many more fell into the trenches. Cheng Pu tried to draw off, but Cao Ren and Cao Hong came toward him from different directions, and the battle went hardly against the soldiers of Zhou Yu, till help came from Ling Tong, who bore back their assailants.

Satisfied with their success, Cao Ren led his forces into the city, while the losers marched back to their own camp.

Zhou Yu, sorely wounded, was taken to his own tent and the army physician called in. With iron forceps, he extracted the sharp bolt and dressed the

wound with a lotion designed to counteract the poison of the metal. But the pain was intense, and the patient rejected all nourishment.

The physician said, "The missile had been poisoned, and the wound will require a long time to heal. You, General, must be kept quiet and especially free from any irritation, which will cause the wound to reopen."

Thereupon, Cheng Pu gave orders that every division was to remain in camp.

Three days later, Niu Jin came within sight and challenged the men of the South Land to battle, but they did not stir. The enemy hurled at them taunts and insults till the sun had fallen low in the sky, but it was of no avail, and Niu Jin withdrew.

Next day, Niu Jin returned and repeated his insulting abuse. Cheng Pu dared not tell the wounded general. The third day, waxing bolder, the enemy came to the very gates of the stockade, the leader shouting that he had come for the purpose of capturing Zhou Yu.

Then Cheng Pu called together his officers, and they discussed the feasibility of retirement into the South Land that they might seek the opinion of Sun Quan.

Ill as he was, Zhou Yu still retained control of the expedition. He knew that the enemy came daily to the gates of his camp and reviled him, although none of his officers told him.

One day, Cao Ren came in person, and there was much rolling of drums and shouting. Cheng Pu, however, steadily refused to accept the challenge and would not let anyone go out.

Then Zhou Yu summoned the officers to his bedside and said, "What mean the drums and the shouting?"

"The soldiers are drilling," was the reply.

“Why do you deceive me?” said Zhou Yu angrily. “Do I not know that our enemies come day by day to our gates and insult us? Yet Cheng Pu suffers this in silence and makes no use of his powers and authority.”

He sent for Cheng Pu and, when he arrived, asked him why he acted thus.

“Because you are ill, and the physician said you were on no account to be provoked to anger. Wherefore, although the enemy challenged us to battle, I kept it from you.”

“And if you do not fight, what think you should be done?” said Zhou Yu.

And they all said they desired to return to the South Land till he had recovered from his wound, when they would make another expedition.

Zhou Yu lay and listened. Suddenly he sprang up, crying, “The noble person who has eaten of his lord’s bounty should die in his lord’s battles. To return home dead and wrapped in a horse’s hide is a happy fate. Am I the sort of person to bring to nought the grand designs of my lord?”

So speaking, he proceeded to gird on his armor, and he mounted his horse. The wonder of the officers only redoubled when their General placed himself at the head of some hundreds of horsemen and went out of the camp gates toward the enemy, then fully arrayed. Cao Ren, their general, stood beneath the great standard.

At sight of the opponents, Cao Ren flourished his whip and began to hurl abuse at them, “Zhou Yu, you babe! I think your fate has met you. You dare not face my army!” The stream of insult never ceased.

Presently, Zhou Yu could stand it no longer. Riding out to the front, he cried, “Here I am, base churl. Look at me!”

The whole of Cao Ren's army was taken aback. But Cao Ren turned to those about him and said, "Let us all revile him!" And the whole army yelled insults.

Zhou Yu grew angry and sent Pan Zhang out to fight. But before he had delivered his first blow, Zhou Yu suddenly uttered a loud cry, and he fell to the ground with blood gushing from his mouth.

At this, Cao Ren's army rushed to the battle, and the army of the South Land pressed forward to meet them. A fierce struggle waged around Zhou Yu's body, but he was borne off safely and taken to his tent.

"Do you feel better?" asked Cheng Pu anxiously.

"It was a ruse of mine," whispered Zhou Yu in reply.

"But what avails it?"

"I am not suffering, but I did that to make our enemies think I was very ill and so oppose them by deceit. I will send a few trusty men to pretend desertion and tell them I am dead. That will cause them to try a night raid on the camp, and we shall have an ambush ready for them. We shall get Cao Ren easily."

"The plan seems excellent," said Cheng Pu.

Soon, from the tent there arose the sound of wailing as for the dead. The soldiers around took up the cry and said one to another, "The General is dead of his wound!," and they all put on the symbols of mourning.

Meanwhile, Cao Ren was consulting with his officers.

Said he, "Zhou Yu lost his temper, and that has caused his wound to reopen and brought on that flow of blood. You saw him fall to the ground,

and he will assuredly die soon.”

Just then, there came in one who said that a few men had come over from the enemy asking to be allowed to join the army of Cao Ren. Among them were two of Cao Cao’s men who had been made prisoners. Cao Ren sent for the deserters and questioned them.

They told him, “Zhou Yu’s wound reopened at his anger, and he died in the camp that day. The leaders are all clothing in white and in mourning. We desert because we have been put to shame by the second-in-command.”

Pleased at this news, Cao Ren at once began to arrange to make a night attack on the camp and, if possible, get the head of the dead general to send to the capital.

“Success depends upon promptitude, so act without delay,” said Chen Jiao.

Niu Jin was told off as Van Leader; Cao Ren himself led the center, while the rear was commanded by Cao Hong and Cao Chun. Chen Jiao and a small force were left to guard Nanjun.

At the first watch, they left the city and took the way toward Zhou Yu’s camp. When they drew near, not a soldier was visible in the camp, but flags and banners and spears were all there, evidently to keep up an appearance of preparation. Feeling at once that they had been tricked, they turned to retreat.

But a bomb exploded, and this was the signal for an attack on all four sides. Han Dang and Jiang Qin pressed in from the east; Zhou Tai and Pan Zhang, from the west; Chen Wu and Lu Meng, from the north; and Xu Sheng and Ding Feng, from the south. The result was a severe defeat for the raiders, and the army of Cao Ren was entirely broken and scattered abroad so that no one part of the beaten army could aid the other.

Cao Ren, with a few horsemen, got out of the press and presently met Cao Hong. The two leaders ran away together, and by the fifth watch, they had gotten near Nanjun. Then, they heard a beating of drums, and Ling Tong appeared, barring the way. There was a small skirmish, and Cao Ren went off at an angle. But he fell in with Gan Ning, who attacked him vigorously. Cao Ren dared not go back to Nanjun, but he made for Xiangyang along the main road. The forces of the South Land pursued him for a time and then desisted.

Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu then made their way to Nanjun where they were startled to see flags on the walls and every sign of occupation.

Before they had recovered from their surprise, there appeared one who cried, "Pardon, General! I had orders from the Directing Instructor to take this city. I am Zhao Yun of Changshan."

Zhou Yu was fiercely angry and gave orders to assault the city, but the defenders sent down flights and flights of arrows, and his troops could not stay near the rampart. So he withdrew and took counsel. In the meantime, he decided to send Gan Ning with a force of several thousand to capture Jingzhou City, and Ling Tong with another army to take Xiangyang. Nanjun could be taken later.

But even as these orders were being given, the scouts came in hurriedly to report, saying, "After Nanjun fell, Zhuge Liang, suddenly forging a military commission, induced the guards of Jingzhou City to leave it and go to the rescue of Cao Ren. Whereupon, Zhang Fei occupied the capital."

Soon after, another messenger came, saying, "Xiahou Dun, at Xiangyang, received from Zhuge Liang dispatches, supported by a commission in due form, saying that Cao Ren was in danger and needed help, whereupon Xiahou Dun marched off, and Guan Yu seized that city."

Thus, the two cities that Zhou Yu wanted had fallen, without the least effort, into the hands of his rival Liu Bei.

“How did Zhuge Liang get this military commission with which he has imposed on the generals?” asked Zhou Yu.

Cheng Pu replied, “He seized that of Chen Jiao and so has got all this region into his power.”

Zhou Yu uttered a great cry, for at that moment his wound had suddenly burst open.

A city falls, but not to us the gain;
The guerdon is another's; ours the pain.

The next chapter will say what befell Zhou Yu.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XII

CHAPTER 52

ZHUGE LIANG NEGOTIATES WITH LU SU; ZHAO YUN CAPTURES GUIYANG.

Zhou Yu's anger at seeing that his rival, Zhuge Liang, had surprised Nanjun, and at hearing the same news of Jingzhou and Xiangyang, was but natural. And this sudden fit of rage caused his wound to reopen. However, he soon recovered. All his officers besought him to accept the situation.

But he said, "What but the death of that bumpkin Zhuge Liang will assuage my anger? If Cheng Pu can but aid me in an attack on Nanjun, I can certainly restore it to the South Land." Soon Lu Su came in, to whom Zhou Yu said, "I simply must fight Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang till it is decided which shall have the upper hand. I must also recapture the cities. Perhaps you can assist me."

"It cannot be done," replied Lu Su. "We are now at grips with Cao Cao, and victory or defeat is undecided. Our lord has not been successful in overcoming Hefei. Do not fight near home, or it will be like people of the same household destroying each other. Should Cao Cao take advantage of this position to make a sudden descent, we should be in a parlous condition. Further, you must remember that Liu Bei and Cao Cao are united by the bonds of old friendship. If the pressure becomes too great, Liu Bei may relinquish these cities, offer them to Cao Cao, and join forces with him to attack the south. That would be a real misfortune."

"I cannot help being angry," said Zhou Yu, "to think that we should have used our resources for their benefit. They get all the advantage."

“Well, let me go and see Liu Bei and talk reason to him. If I can arrive at no understanding, then attack at once.”

“Excellent proposal!” cried all present.

So Lu Su, with his escort, went away to Nanjun to carry out his proposal and try to arrange matters. He reached the city wall and summoned the gate, whereat Zhao Yun came out to speak with him.

“I have something to say to Liu Bei,” said he. “I wish to see him.”

“My lord and Zhuge Liang are in Jingzhou,” was the reply.

Lu Su turned away and hastened to Jingzhou. He found the walls bedecked with flags and everything in excellent order. In his heart, he admired the sight and thought what an able person was the commander of that army.

The guards reported his arrival, and Zhuge Liang ordered them to throw wide the gate. Lu Su was led to the government house and, after the usual exchange of salutes, Zhuge Liang and his visitor took their respective seats.

Having finished the tea, Lu Su said, “My master, Marquis Sun Quan, and the commander of his army, Zhou Yu, have sent me to lay before the Imperial Uncle their views. When Cao Cao led his huge host southward, he gave out that it was for the conquest of the South Land. But really his intention was to destroy Liu Bei. Happily, our army was able to repulse that mighty host and so saved him. Wherefore, Jingzhou, with its nine territories of forty-two counties, ought to belong to us. But by a treacherous move, your master has occupied Jingzhou and Xiangyang so that we have spent our treasure in vain and our armies have fought to no purpose. The Imperial Uncle has reaped the benefits to the full. This is not as it should be.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “Lu Su, you are a man of high intelligence. Why do you hold such language? You know the saying that all things return to their owner. These places have never belonged to the South Land, but were of the patrimony of Liu Biao, and though he is dead, his son remains. Should not the uncle assist the nephew to recover his own? Could my master have refrained?”

“If the nephew Liu Qi, the rightful heir, had occupied these cities, there would have been something to say. But he is at Jiangxia and not here.”

“Would you like to see him?” said Zhuge Liang. At the same time, he ordered the servants to request Liu Qi to come. Thereupon, Liu Qi at once appeared, supported by two attendants.

Addressing Lu Su, Liu Qi said, “I am too weak to perform the correct ceremonies. I pray you pardon me, Lu Su.”

Lu Su said not a word. He was too much taken aback. However, he recovered himself presently and said, “But if the heir had not been here, what then?”

“The heir is living but from day to day. Should he go, then there will be something to talk about.”

“Should he die, then you ought to return these cities to us.”

“You state the exact facts,” said Zhuge Liang.

Then, a banquet was prepared, and that over, Lu Su took his leave. He hastened back to his own camp and gave Zhou Yu an account of his mission.

“But what is there for us in the chance of Liu Qi’s death?” said Zhou Yu. “He is in his very first youth. When will these places fall to us?”

“Rest content, General. Let me guarantee the return of these places.”

“But how can you?” asked Zhou Yu.

“Liu Qi has indulged too freely in wine and women. He is a wreck and rotten to the core, miserably emaciated and panting for breath. I will not give him half-a-year’s life. Then I will go to Liu Bei, and he will be unable to deny the request.”

But Zhou Yu was still unmollified.

Suddenly, came a messenger from Sun Quan, who said, “Our lord is laying siege to Hefei but in several battles has had no victory. He now orders you to withdraw from here and go to Hefei to help him.”

Thereupon, Zhou Yu marched back to Chaisang. Having reached home, he began to give attention to the recovery of his health. He sent Cheng Pu with the marine and land forces to Hefei, ready for Sun Quan’s call.

Liu Bei was exceedingly well-satisfied with the possession of his new region, and his thoughts turned to more ambitious schemes. Then, a certain man came to him to suggest a plan. This man was Yi Ji and, remembering the kindly feeling of other days, Liu Bei received him most graciously.

When Yi Ji was seated and his host had asked what he proposed, he said, “You wish for a plan to accomplish yet greater deeds. Why not seek wise people and ask them?”

“Where are these wise people to be found?” asked Liu Bei.

Yi Ji replied, “In this region there is a certain family named Ma: five brothers, all of whom are known as men of ability. The youngest is called Ma Su. The ablest is Ma Liang, who has white hairs in his eyebrows, and the villagers have a little rhyming couplet that means, ‘There are five sons

in the family Ma, but white eyebrows is the best of them.' You should get this man to draw up a plan for you."

So Liu Bei told them to request his presence. Ma Liang came and was received with great respect.

He was asked to suggest a plan for the security of the newly acquired region, and he said, "Attacked as it is on all sides, this region is not one in which one is permanently secure. You should let Liu Qi remain here till he has recovered from his present illness, but the actual protection of the place is to be placed in the hands of trusty friends. Obtain an edict appointing him Imperial Protector of Jingzhou, and the people will be content. Then, conquer Wuling, Changsha, Guiyang, and Lingling. And with the resources you will thus acquire, you will have the means for further plans. That should be your policy."

"Which of the four territories should be first taken?" asked Liu Bei.

"The nearest, Lingling, which lies in the west of River Xiang. The next is Wuling, and after these the other two."

Ma Liang was given an appointment as Imperial Protector Assistant, with Yi Ji as his second. Then Liu Bei consulted Zhuge Liang about sending Liu Qi to Xiangyang so that Guan Yu could be free to return. Next, they made preparations to attack Lingling, and Zhang Fei was to lead the van. Zhao Yun was to guard the rear, while Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang were to command the main body. Fifteen thousand troops were left to hold Jingzhou. Mi Zhu and Liu Feng were left to guard Jiangling.

The Governor of Lingling was Liu Du. When danger thus threatened, he called in his son Liu Xiang, and they discussed the case.

The son was very self-confident and said to his father, "Have no anxiety. They may have the known and famous warriors, Zhang Fei and Zhao Yun, but we have our leader, Xing Darong, who is match for any number of men. He can withstand them."

So Liu Xiang, with the famous leader, was entrusted with the defense. At the head of a full ten thousand troops, they made a camp about ten miles from the city, with the shelter of hills and a river. Their scouts brought news that Zhuge Liang was close at hand with one army. Xing Darong decided to check his advance and went forth to oppose him. When both sides were arrayed, Xing Darong rode to the front. In his hand, he held a battleax called Cleaver of Mountains.

In a mighty voice, he cried, "Rebels, how comes it that you have dared to enter our territory?"

From the center of the opposing army, where appeared a cluster of yellow flags, there came out a small four-wheeled carriage in which sat, very erect, a certain man dressed in white, with a turban on his head. In one hand, he held a feather fan, with which he signed to the warrior to approach.

At the same time, he said, "I am Zhuge Liang of Nanyang, whose plans broke up the countless legions of Cao Cao so that nothing of them returned whence they started. How, then, can you hope to oppose me? I now offer you peace, and it would be well for you to surrender."

Xing Darong laughed derisively, saying, "Their defeat was owing to the plan of Zhou Yu. You had nothing to do with it. How dare you try to deceive me?"

So saying, he swung up his battleax and came running toward Zhuge Liang. But Zhuge Liang turned his carriage and retired within the lines, which closed up behind him. Xing Darong came rushing on. As he reached the array, the troops fell away on both sides and let him enter. Well within,

he looked round for his chief opponent. Seeing a yellow flag moving along quietly, he concluded that Zhuge Liang was with it and so followed it. When the flag had gone over the shoulder of a hill, it stopped.

Then suddenly, as if the earth had opened and swallowed it up, the four-wheeled carriage disappeared, while in its place came a ferocious warrior, with a long Serpent Halberd in his hand and mounted on a curvetting steed. It was Zhang Fei, who dashed at Xing Darong with a tremendous roar.

Nothing daunted, Xing Darong whirled up his battleax and went to meet Zhang Fei. But after four or five bouts, Xing Darong saw that there was no chance of victory for him, so he turned his horse and ran. Zhang Fei pursued, the air shaking with the thunder of his voice. Then, the ambushing troops appeared. Xing Darong, nothing daunted, rushed into their midst.

But in front appeared another warrior barring the way, who called out, "Do you know me? I am Zhao Yun of Changshan."

Xing Darong knew that all was over. He could neither fight nor flee. So he dismounted and gave in. He was fettered and taken to camp, where were Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang. Liu Bei ordered him out to execution, but Zhuge Liang hastily checked him.

"We will accept your submission if you capture Liu Xiang for us," said Zhuge Liang.

The captive accepted the offer without the least hesitation.

When Zhuge Liang asked how he intended to do it, he replied, "If you will set me free, I shall be cunning of speech. If you raid the camp this evening, you will find me your helper on the inside. I will make Liu Xiang a prisoner and will hand him over to you. He being captured, his father will surrender at once."

Liu Bei doubted the good faith of the man, but Zhuge Liang said, "Xing Darong is not deceiving."

Wherefore, Xing Darong was set free and went back to camp, where he related all that had occurred.

"What can we do?" asked Liu Xiang.

"We can meet trick with trick. Put soldiers in ambush tonight outside our camp, while within, everything will appear as usual. When Zhuge Liang comes, we shall capture him."

The ambush was prepared. At the second watch, an army came out of the darkness and appeared in the gate. Each carried a torch, and they began to set fires all about them. Out dashed Liu Xiang and Xing Darong, and the incendiaries forthwith fled. The two warriors pursued them, but the fugitives ran and then suddenly disappeared at about three miles from the camp.

Much surprised, the two turned to wend their way back to their own camp. It was still burning, for no one had extinguished the flames. Soon, from behind them came out Zhang Fei.

Liu Xiang called out to his companion, "Do not enter the burning camp, but go to attack Zhuge Liang's stockade."

Thereupon, they turned again, but at a distance of three miles, Zhao Yun and an army suddenly debouched upon their road. Zhao Yun attacked and slew Xing Darong by a spear thrust. Liu Xiang turned to flee, but Zhang Fei was close upon him and made him prisoner. He was thrown across a horse, bound, and taken to camp.

When he saw Zhuge Liang, Liu Xiang said, "The ruse was Xing Darong's evil counsel. I was forced to follow."

Zhuge Liang ordered them to loose his bonds, had him properly dressed, and gave him wine to cheer him and help him forget his troubles. When he had recovered, he was told to go to his father and persuade him to yield.

“And if he does not, the city shall be destroyed and everyone put to death,” said Zhuge Liang as Liu Xiang left.

The son returned to the city and told his father these things. Liu Du at once decided to yield and forthwith hoisted the flag of surrender, opened the gates, and went out, taking his seal of office with him. He was reappointed to his governorship, but his son was sent to Jingzhou for service with the army.

The people of Lingling all rejoiced greatly at the change of rulers. Liu Bei entered the city, calmed and reassured the people, and rewarded his army.

But he at once began to think of the next move and asked for an officer to volunteer to take Guiyang. Zhao Yun offered, but Zhang Fei vehemently proposed himself for the command of the expedition. So they wrangled and contended.

Then, said Zhuge Liang, “Undoubtedly, Zhao Yun was first to volunteer, wherefore he is to go.”

Still, Zhang Fei opposed and insisted on going. They were told to decide the dispute by drawing lots, and Zhao Yun drew the winning lot.

Zhang Fei was still very angry and grumbled, “I would not have needed any helpers: just three thousand soldiers and I would have done it.”

“I also only want three thousand soldiers,” said Zhao Yun. “And if I fail, I am willing to suffer the penalties.”

Zhuge Liang was pleased that Zhao Yun recognized his responsibility so fully, and with the commission, he gave Zhao Yun three thousand veterans.

Though the matter was thus settled, Zhang Fei was discontented and pressed his claim till Liu Bei bade him desist and retire.

With his three thousand troops, Zhao Yun took the road to Guiyang. The Governor, Zhao Fan, soon heard of his approach and hastily called his officers to take counsel. Two of them, Chen Ying and Bao Long, offered to meet the invaders and turn them back.

These two warriors belonged to Guiyang and had made themselves famous as hunters. Chen Ying used a “Flying Fork,” and Bao Long could draw a bow with such force that he had been known to send an arrow through two tigers. So strong were they, as well as bold.

They stood before Zhao Fan and said, “We will lead the way against Liu Bei.”

The Governor replied, “I know that Liu Bei is of the imperial family, and Zhuge Liang is exceedingly resourceful. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei are very bold. But the commander of this force is Zhao Yun, who on one occasion faced a hundred legions of Cao Cao and never blenched. Our small force here cannot stand against such people. We shall have to yield.”

“Let me go out to fight,” said Chen Ying. “If I cannot capture Zhao Yun, then you can yield.”

The Governor could not resist him and gave his consent. Then, Chen Ying, with three thousand troops, went forth.

Soon, the two armies came within sight of each other. When Chen Ying's army was drawn up, he girded on his Flying Fork and rode to the front. Zhao Yun gripped his spear and rode to meet him.

Zhao Yun began to rail at Chen Ying, saying, "My master is the brother of Liu Biao, to whom belonged this land. Now, he is supporting his nephew, the heir and son of Liu Biao. Having taken Jingzhou, I am come to soothe and comfort the people here. Why, then, do you oppose me?"

"We are supporters of the Prime Minister Cao Cao and are no followers of your master," was the reply.

Zhao Yun, waxing angry, firmly grasped his spear and rode forward. His opponent twirled the Flying Fork and advanced. The horses met, but after four or five encounters, Chen Ying, realizing that there was no hope of victory, turned and fled. Zhao Yun followed.

Suddenly turning, Chen Ying got close to Zhao Yun and flung the fork. Zhao Yun deftly caught it and threw it back. Chen Ying dodged away, but Zhao Yun soon caught him up, seized him, dragged him out of the saddle, and threw him to the ground. Then Zhao Yun called up his soldiers, and they bound the prisoner. Chen Ying was taken to the camp, while his troops scattered and fled.

"I thought you would not dare a combat with me," said Zhao Yun to the prisoner when they had returned to camp. "However, I am not going to put you to death. You are free. But persuade your master to yield."

Chen Ying asked pardon, put his hands over his head, and fled like a frightened rat. When he reached his city, he told the Governor all these things.

"My original desire was to yield, but you insisted on fighting, and this is what it has brought you to."

So spoke the Governor. He bade Chen Ying begone and then prepared his letter of submission and put up his seal. With a small party, Zhao Fan went out of the city and wended his way to Zhao Yun's camp. Zhao Yun received him graciously, offered him wine, and then accepted the seal of office.

After the wine had gone round several times, Zhao Fan became talkative, saying, "General, your surname is the same as mine, and five centuries ago, we were one family. You are from Changshan, and so am I. Moreover, we are from the same village. If you do not mind, we might swear brotherhood. I should be very happy."

Zhao Yun was pleased, and they compared ages: they were of the same year. However, Zhao Yun was the elder by four months, and so Zhao Fan made his bow as younger brother. The two men, having so many things in common, were very pleased with each other and seemed fitted to be close friends.

At eventide, the feast broke up, and the late Governor returned to his dwelling. Next day, Zhao Fan requested Zhao Yun to enter the city, where, after Zhao Yun had assured the people of their safety, he went to a banquet at the state residence. When they had become mellow with wine, the Governor invited Zhao Yun into the inner quarters, where wine was again served. When Zhao Yun was a little intoxicated, his host bade a woman come forth and offer a cup of wine to the guest.

The woman was dressed entirely in white silk, and her beauty was such as to overthrow cities and ruin states.

"Who is she?" asked Zhao Yun.

“My sister-in-law. She is of the Fan family.”

Zhao Yun at once changed his look and treated her with deference. When she had offered the cup, the host told her to be seated and join the party, but Zhao Yun declined this addition to the evening, and the lady withdrew.

“Why did you trouble your sister-in-law to present wine to me, brother?” asked Zhao Yun.

“There is a reason,” said the host, smiling. “I pray you let me tell you. My brother died three years ago and left her a widow. But this cannot be regarded as the end of the story. I have often advised her to marry again, but she said she would only do so if three conditions were satisfied in one man’s person: the suitor must be famous for literary grace and warlike exploits; secondly, handsome and highly esteemed; and, thirdly, of the same name as our own. Now where in all the world was such a combination likely to be found? Yet here are you, brother: dignified, handsome, and prepossessing, a man whose name is known all over the wide world and of the desired name. You exactly fulfill my sister’s ambitions. If you do not find her too plain, I should like her to marry you, and I will provide a dowry. What think you of such an alliance, such a bond of relationship?”

But Zhao Yun rose in anger, shouting, “As I have just sworn brotherhood with you, is not your sister-in-law my sister-in-law? How could you think of bringing such confusion into the relationship?”

Shame suffused Zhao Fan’s face, and he said, “I only thought of being kind to you. Why are you so very rude to me?”

Zhao Fan looked right and left to his attendants with murder in his eye. Zhao Yun raised his fist and knocked him down. Then he strode out of the place, mounted, and rode out of the city.

Zhao Fan at once called in his two generals.

Chen Ying said, "He has gone away in a rage, which means that we shall have to fight him."

"I greatly fear you will lose," said Zhao Fan.

"We will pretend to be deserters," said Bao Long, "and so get among his soldiers. When you challenge him, we will suddenly catch him."

"We shall have to take some others with us," said Chen Ying.

"Five hundred troops will be ample," said Bao Long.

So in the night, the two men and their followers ran over to Zhao Yun's camp to desert.

Zhao Yun understood the trick they would play, but he called them in, and they said, "When Zhao Fan tempted you with that fair lady, he wanted to make you drunk and get you into the private apartments so that he might murder you and send your head to Cao Cao. Yes, he was as wicked as that, even. We saw you go away in anger, and we thought that would mean grave trouble for us, and so we have deserted."

Zhao Yun listened with simulated joy, and he had wine served to the two men, and pressed them to drink so that they were quite overcome. When this was done, he had both bound with cords, called up their followers, and asked them whether this was real or pretended desertion, and they told him the truth.

Then, he gave the soldiers wine and said, "Those who wanted to harm me are your leaders and not you. If you do as I tell you, you shall be well-rewarded."

The soldiers threw themselves to the ground and promised obedience. Thereupon, the two leaders—Chen Ying and Bao Long—were beheaded. Their five hundred troops were made to lead the way and act as screen for a

whole thousand horsemen, and the party set out at full speed for Guiyang. When they got there, they summoned the gate and said that they had slain Zhao Yun and had come back, and they wished to speak with the Governor.

Those on the wall lighted flares and inspected those at the gate. Surely enough, they wore the uniforms of their own people, and Zhao Fan went out to them. He was immediately seized and made prisoner. Then Zhao Yun entered the city, restored order, and sent off swift messengers to Liu Bei who at once, with his adviser, came to Guiyang.

When they had taken their seats, the late Governor was brought in and placed at the foot of the steps. In response to Zhuge Liang's questions, Zhao Fan related the story of the proposed marriage.

Said Zhuge Liang to Zhao Yun, "But this seems a fine project. Why did you receive the proposal so roughly?"

Zhao Yun said, "Zhao Fan and I had just sworn brotherhood, and so marriage with his sister-in-law would have called down on my head universal blame. That is one reason. Another is that I should have made his sister fail to keep her dutiful chastity. And thirdly, I did not know whether I might trust such a proposal from one who had just yielded to force. My lord, your position as a recent victor was one of danger, and could I risk the failure of your plans for my sake?"

Liu Bei said, "But now that the plan has been carried out, and we are victors, would you care to marry her?"

"All my fear is for the building of a reputation. Family can come later."

"You are indeed right-honorable," said Liu Bei.

Zhao Fan was released and restored to the governorship. Zhao Yun was conspicuously rewarded.

But Zhang Fei was angry and disappointed.

“So, Zhao Yun gets all the praise, and I am worth nothing,” cried he. “Just give me three thousand soldiers, and I will take Wuling and bring you the Governor.”

This pleased Zhuge Liang, who said, “There is no reason why you should not go, but I will only require one condition of you.”

Wondrous, the plans of the general, so doth he conquer
in battle;
Soldiers keenly competing gain renown in the
fighting.

The condition that Zhuge Liang made will appear in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XII

CHAPTER 53

GUAN YU RELEASES HUANG ZHONG; SUN QUAN FIGHTS WITH ZHANG LIAO.

What Zhuge Liang required from Zhang Fei was a formal recognition of responsibility for success.

Said Zhuge Liang, "When Zhao Yun went on his expedition, he gave written guarantee of being responsible for success. You ought to do the same, now that you are starting for Wuling. In that case, you may have men and start."

So Zhang Fei gave the required document and received joyfully the three thousand soldiers he had demanded. He set out at once and traveled without rest till he reached Wuling.

When the Governor of Wuling, Jin Xuan by name, heard that an expedition against him was afoot, he mustered his officers and recruited brave soldiers and put his weapons in order, ready for the struggle. And his army moved out of the city.

A certain secretary, Gong Zhi, remonstrated with his chief for opposing a scion of the imperial house, saying, "Liu Bei is of the Hans, and recognized as an uncle of the Emperor. All the world knows he is kindly and righteous. Added to that, his Brother Zhang Fei is extraordinarily bold.

We cannot face them in battle with hope of success. Our best course is to give in.”

But his master angrily replied, “Do you want to play the traitor and take the side of the rebels and help them?”

Jin Xuan called in the lictors and told them to put Gong Zhi to death.

The other officers interceded for Gong Zhi, saying, “It augers ill to start an expedition by slaying your own officer.”

So the Governor merely sent Gong Zhi sway. He himself led the army out of the city. After marching seven miles, he met Zhang Fei’s army.

Zhang Fei at once rode to the front, spear ready to thrust, and opened with a shout. Jin Xuan turned to his officers and asked who would go out to fight him, but no one replied. They were too afraid.

So the Governor himself galloped out, flourishing his sword. Seeing him advance, Zhang Fei shouted in a voice of thunder. Poor Jin Xuan was seized with panic, turned pale, and could not go on. He turned his steed and fled. Then, Zhang Fei and his army went in pursuit and smote the fugitives, chasing them to the city wall.

Here, the fugitives were greeted by a flight of arrows from their own wall. Greatly frightened, Jin Xuan looked up to see what this meant, and there was Gong Zhi, who had opposed him, standing on the wall.

“You brought defeat upon yourself because you opposed the will of Heaven,” cried the traitor. “The people and I are determined to yield to Liu Bei.”

Just as Gong Zhi finished speaking, an arrow wounded Jin Xuan in the face and he fell to the ground. Thereupon, his own troops cut off his head, which they forthwith presented to Zhang Fei. Gong Zhi then went out and made formal submission, and Zhang Fei bade him take his letter and the

seal to Guiyang to Liu Bei, who was pleased to hear of Zhang Fei's success and gave the governorship to Gong Zhi. Soon after, Liu Bei came to Wuling in person and soothed the people.

This done, he wrote to Guan Yu, telling him Zhao Yun and Zhang Fei had gained a territory each.

Guan Yu at once wrote back and said, "Changsha is yet taken. If I am not thought too feeble, I would like to be sent to attack it."

Liu Bei agreed and sent Zhang Fei to relieve his Brother, whom Liu Bei ordered to return and prepare for an expedition to Changsha. Guan Yu came and went in to see his elder Brother and Zhuge Liang.

At this interview, Zhuge Liang said, "Zhao Yun has taken Guiyang, and Zhang Fei Wuling. Both successful warriors have done their work with three thousand troops. The Governor of Changsha, Han Xuan, is not worth mentioning, but there is a certain general with him named Huang Zhong who has to be reckoned with.

"Huang Zhong is a native of Nanyang. He used to be in the service of Liu Biao and was a colleague Liu Biao's nephew, Liu Pan, when he was in command of Changsha. After Liu Biao's death, he joined Han Xuan when he took command of the city. Now, although he is nearly sixty, he is a man to be feared and a warrior of a thousand. You ought to take a larger number of troops."

Guan Yu replied, "Instructor, what makes you damp another man's ardor to fight and do away with your own dignity? I do not think the old leader need be discussed, and I do not think I require three companies of soldiers. Give me my own five hundred swordsmen, and I will have the heads of both Han Xuan and Huang Zhong to sacrifice to our standard."

Liu Bei resisted this decision of Guan Yu, but Guan Yu would not give way. He just took his five hundred and set out.

“If he is not careful how he attacks Huang Zhong, there will be a mishap,” said Zhuge Liang. “You must go to support him.”

Liu Bei accordingly, at the head of another and larger party, set out toward Changsha.

Governor Han Xuan of Changsha was of hasty temperament with small compunction in matters of life and death, and was universally hated. When he heard of the army coming against him, he called his Veteran leader, Huang Zhong, to ask advice.

The latter said, “Do not be distressed. This sword of mine and my bow are equal to the slaughter of all who may come.”

Huang Zhong had been very strong and could bend a three hundred-pound bow and was a most perfect archer.

When Huang Zhong referred to his prowess, a certain man spoke up and said, “Let not the Veteran General go out to battle. Trust to my right arm, and you shall have this Guan Yu a prisoner in your hands.”

The speaker was General Yang Lin. The Governor accepted his offer and told off a thousand troops to go with him, and they quickly rode out of the city. About fifteen miles from the city, they observed a great cloud of dust approaching and soon distinguished the invaders.

Yang Lin set his spear and rode to the front to abuse and fight. Guan Yu made no reply to the abuse, but rode forward, flourishing his sword. The warriors soon met, and in the third encounter, Yang Lin was cut down.

Guan Yu's army dashed forward and pursued the defeated force to the city wall.

When the Governor heard of this reverse, he ordered the Veteran Huang Zhong to go out while he went up on the city wall to watch the fight.

Huang Zhong took his sword and crossed the drawbridge of Changsha at the head of his force. Guan Yu, seeing an old leader riding out, knew it must be Huang Zhong. Guan Yu halted his troops and placed them in line with their swords at the point.

Then, sitting there on horseback, he said, "He who comes is surely Huang Zhong, eh?"

"Since you know me, how dare you come within my boundaries?" replied the Veteran.

"I have come expressly to get your head!"

Then the combat began. They fought a hundred and more bouts, and neither seemed nearer victory. At this point, the Governor, fearing some mishap to his Veteran General, beat the gong to retreat, and the battle ceased, one side going into the city of Changsha and the other camping three miles away to the rear.

Guan Yu thought in his heart that the fame of the Veteran opposed to him was well-merited. He had fought a hundred bouts and discovered never a weak spot. He determined that in the next encounter he would use a "swinging-horse stab" and so overcome Huang Zhong.

Next day, the early meal eaten, Guan Yu came to the city wall and offered his challenge. The Governor seated himself on the city wall and bade his Veteran warrior go out to accept it. At the head of a few horsemen, Huang Zhong dashed across the drawbridge. The two champions engaged,

and at the end of half-a-hundred bouts, neither had the advantage. On both sides, the soldiers cheered lustily.

When the drums were beating most furiously, suddenly Guan Yu wheeled round his horse and fled. Of course, Huang Zhong followed. Just as the moment for the feint arrived, Guan Yu heard behind him a tremendous crash and turned to see his pursuer lying prone upon the ground. Huang Zhong's steed had stumbled and thrown him.

Guan Yu turned, raised his sword in both hands, and cried in a fierce tone, "I spare your life, but quick! Get another horse and come again to battle."

Huang Zhong pulled his horse to its feet hastily, leapt upon its back, and went into the city at full speed. The Governor was astonished and asked for an account of the accident.

"The horse is too old," replied Huang Zhong.

"Why did you not shoot since your aim is so perfect?" asked the Governor.

"I will try again tomorrow," said Huang Zhong. "I will run away as if overcome, and so tempt him to the drawbridge and then shoot him."

Han Xuan gave the Veteran a gray horse that he usually rode himself. Huang Zhong thanked him and retired.

But Huang Zhong could not forget Guan Yu's generous conduct, nor could he understand it. He could not make up his mind to shoot the man who had spared his life. Yet if he did not shoot, he betrayed his duty as a soldier. It was very perplexing, and the whole night spent in thinking it over found him still undecided.

At daybreak, a man came in saying that Guan Yu was near the wall and challenging them again. So Huang Zhong gave order to go out.

Now Guan Yu, having fought for two days and not having overcome Huang Zhong, was very ill at ease. So he called up all his dignity when he went forth to fight that day. When they had got to the thirtieth bout, Huang Zhong fled as if he was overcome. Guan Yu pursued.

As he rode away, Huang Zhong thought in his heart, "He spared me only yesterday, and I cannot bear to shoot him today."

Putting up his sword, Huang Zhong took his bow and twanged the string only. No arrow flew. Guan Yu dodged, but seeing no arrow in the air, he retook the pursuit. Again, Huang Zhong twanged an arrowless bowstring, and again, Guan Yu dodged, but no arrow came.

Then, Guan Yu said to himself, *He cannot shoot*, and pressed on in pursuit.

As they neared the city wall, the Veteran stopped on the drawbridge, fitted an arrow, pulled the bow, and sent an arrow flying that just hit the base of the plume on Guan Yu's helmet.

The soldiers shouted at the display of marksmanship. Guan Yu was taken aback and set off for camp with the arrow still stuck. Then he heard that Huang Zhong's skill was said to be equal to piercing a willow leaf at a hundred paces, and Guan Yu understood that he owed this warning in the shape of an arrow in his plume to gratitude for sparing the Veteran the preceding day.

Both withdrew. But when the Veteran leader went up on the wall to see the Governor, he was at once seized.

"What have I done?" cried Huang Zhong.

"I have seen these last three days that you were fooling me. You were slack the day before yesterday, which proved you had some sinister

intention. Yesterday, when your horse stumbled and he spared you, it showed that you were in league with him. And today, you twice twanged a vain bowstring, while at the third shot you only hit your opponent's helmet. Dare you say there is no secret understanding in all this? If I do not put you to death, it will assuredly redound to my own hurt."

Han Xuan ordered Huang Zhong to be executed outside the city gate. Han Xuan also met the intercession of the officers by saying, "Anyone who pleads for the condemned shall be regarded as being in the plot."

The executioners had hustled the old man out of the city, and the sword was in the air and on the point of descending, when a man suddenly dashed in, cut down the lictor, and rescued Huang Zhong.

"Huang Zhong is our bulwark!" shouted he. "To destroy him is to destroy the Changsha people. This Governor is too fierce and cruel, too lightly values good people, and is too arrogant toward his officers. We ought rather to kill him, and those who will, let them follow me."

All eyes turned toward this bold speaker, who was bronzed and had eyes like the Cowherd's star. Some of them knew him as Wei Yan, a native of Yiyang. He would have followed Liu Bei from Xiangyang but, unable to come up with him, had gone into the service of Han Xuan. Han Xuan took exception to his arrogant carriage and lack of polish and neglected him. And so Wei Yan had remained in the city without office.

After the rescue of Huang Zhong, Wei Yan called upon the people to make an end of the Governor. He waved his arm and shouted to the people. Soon, he had a following of several hundreds. Huang Zhong could not stop them. In a very short time, Wei Yan had dashed up on the wall, and Han Xuan lay dead. Taking his head, Wei Yan rode off out of the city to lay the bloodstained trophy at the feet of Guan Yu, who forthwith went into the city to restore confidence.

When the people were all quiet, Guan Yu sent to request Huang Zhong to come to see him, but the old general pleaded illness.

Next, Guan Yu sent the good news to his Brother and to Zhuge Liang and asked them to come.

Soon after Guan Yu had left to capture Changsha, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang had followed him up with supports in case of need. While on the march, a black flag was furled backwards and a crow flew over from north to south, croaking thrice as it passed.

“What good or evil things do these omens presage?” asked Liu Bei.

With hands hidden within his long sleeves, Zhuge Liang performed a rapid calculation on his fingers of the auspices and replied, “Changsha is taken and a great leader mastered. We shall know soon after noon.”

Sure enough, a simple soldier presently came galloping along with the welcome tidings of the capture of the city, and saying that the two city warriors who had aided them were near, awaiting the arrival of Liu Bei. Soon after they arrived, Liu Bei entered the city, where he was escorted to the magistracy and heard the recital of Huang Zhong’s deeds.

Liu Bei went in person to Huang Zhong’s house and inquired for him, whereupon Huang Zhong came forth and yielded formally. Huang Zhong requested to be permitted to bury the remains of the late Governor on the east of the city.



Lofty as is heaven above earth was the spirit of the
 general,
Who, even in his old age, suffered sorrows in the
 south;
Cheerfully had he approached death, with no thought
 of resentment,
But, bowing before the conqueror, he hung his head
 and was ashamed.
Praise the sword, gleaming snow-white, and the glory
 of super-human bravery,
Consider the mail-clad steed snuffing the wind and
 rejoicing in the battle,
That warrior's name shall stand high and its brightness
 be undiminished,
While the cold moon sheds her light on the waters of
 River Xiang.



Liu Bei was generous toward the Veteran leader, who had come under his banner, and was grateful for the service of Wei Yan. He made both of them Van Leaders.

Having given in with good grace, Huang Zhong introduced a nephew of Liu Biao, named Liu Pan, then living in Yuxian near by. Liu Bei gave Liu Pan the governorship of Changsha.

All being tranquil in the four territories, Liu Bei and his army returned to Jingzhou City. The name of Youkou was changed to Gongan, and soon,

all was prosperous. Able people from all sides came to assist in the administration. Guards were placed at strategic points.

When Zhou Yu went to Chaisang to recover from his wound, he left Gan Ning in command at Baling and Ling Tong at Hanyang. The fleet was shared between these two places to be ready to move when required. The remainder of the force was under Cheng Pu, and he went to Hefei, where Sun Quan had been since the fight at the Red Cliffs. Sun Quan was still fighting the northern army, and in half-a-score encounters, small and great, neither had gained a decided advantage. Sun Quan could not approach the city, but entrenched himself about fifteen miles away.

When Sun Quan heard of the coming of reinforcements of Cheng Pu, he was very pleased and went in person to meet and welcome the leaders. Lu Su was in advance of the main body, and Sun Quan dismounted and stood by the roadside to greet him. As soon as he saw this, Lu Su slid out of the saddle and made his obeisance.

But the officers were amazed at the attitude of Sun Quan, and still more so when Sun Quan asked Lu Su to remount and ride by his side.

Presently, Sun Quan said secretly to Lu Su, "I, the Lone One, dismounted to greet you as you saw. Was that manifestation enough for you?"

"No," replied Lu Su.

"Then what further can I do?"

"I want to see your authority and virtue spread over the four seas and enfold the nine regions, and you, yourself, playing your part as emperor.

Then will my name be inscribed in the annals, and I shall indeed be known.”

Sun Quan clapped his hands and laughed gleefully.

When they reached the camp, a banquet was prepared and the services of the new arrivals were praised and glorified.

The destruction of Hefei was one day under discussion, when one came in to say that Zhang Liao had sent a written challenge to battle. Sun Quan tore open the cover, and what he read therein made him very wroth.

“This Zhang Liao has insulted me grossly,” said he. “He hears that Cheng Pu has arrived and sends a challenge. Tomorrow, O newly-come warriors, you shall see me fight with him. You shall have no share in the battle.”

Orders were given that, next morning, the army would move out of camp and advance on Hefei. Early in the morning, when they had advanced about halfway, they met the army of Cao Cao and prepared for battle. Sun Quan, with helmet of gold and breastplate of silver, rode to the front with Song Qian and Jia Hua, each armed with a halberd to support him and guard him one on each side.

When the third roll of the drum ceased, the center of Cao Cao’s army opened to allow the exit of three warriors, all fully armed. They were Zhang Liao, supported by Li Dian and Yue Jin. Zhang Liao, the central figure, especially designated Sun Quan as the object of his challenge.

Sun Quan took his spear and was about to accept the challenge, from when the ranks behind him came out Taishi Ci, who galloped forth with his spear ready to thrust. Zhang Liao whirled up his sword to strike the

newcomer, and the two fought nearly a hundred bouts without a decisive blow.

Then, said Li Dian to Yue Jin, “He there opposite us with the golden helm is Sun Quan. Could we but capture him, the loss of our eight hundred thirty thousand soldiers at the Red Cliffs would be amply avenged.”

So speaking Yue Jin rode out, alone, just one man and one sword, and went sidelong toward the two combatants. Then suddenly, swift as a flash of lightning, he ran forward and slashed at Sun Quan. But Sun Quan’s two guards were too quick for him. Up went the two halberds of Song Qian and Jia Hua, guarding their lord’s head. The blow fell, but on the crossed halberds, which were shorn through near the heads, and in another moment they were hammering away on the head of Yue Jin’s steed with the shafts of their broken weapons and forcing it back.

Song Qian snatched a spear from a soldier nearby and went in pursuit of Yue Jin, but Li Dian, on the other side, fitted an arrow to his bow and aimed at Song Qian’s heart from behind. And Song Qian fell as the bowstring twanged.

Then, Taishi Ci, seeing his colleague felled, left off the fight with Zhang Liao and returned to his own line. At this, Zhang Liao fell on in a swift attack, and the army of Sun Quan, thrown into confusion, scattered and fled.

Zhang Liao, having distinguished Sun Quan in the distance, galloped in pursuit and had nearly come up with him, when Cheng Pu happily rushed in from one side of the line of fight, stayed the pursuit, and saved his master. Zhang Liao withdrew to Hefei. Sun Quan was escorted back to his main camp, where his beaten soldiers gradually rejoined him and their ranks were reformed.

When Sun Quan knew of the death of Song Qian, he was greatly pained and wept aloud.

But Adviser Zhang Hong reproached him, saying, “My lord, you relied too much upon your martial prowess and lightly engaged in battle with a formidable enemy. Every person in the army was chilled with fear, and you lost a general and some of your banners. It is not for you to exhibit prowess on the actual battlefield and encroach upon the duties of a general. Rather, curb and repress such physical feats as those ancient Xia Yu and Meng Ben, and contemplate schemes of exercising princely virtues with the hegemony of all the feudal states. It is because of your ill-regulated action in engaging in battle that Song Qian perished at the hands of your enemies. Hereafter, you should regard as most important your personal safety.”

“Yes, it is indeed a fault,” said Sun Quan. “I will reform.”

Soon after, Taishi Ci entered the tent and said, “In my command there is a certain Ge Ding, brother of a groom in the army of Zhang Liao. This servant is deeply resentful on account of a punishment inflicted upon him and is anxious to be revenged. He has sent over to say that he will show a signal tonight when he has assassinated Zhang Liao in revenge for the death of your late leader Song Qian. I wish to take some troops over to await this signal to attack.”

“Where is Ge Ding?” asked Sun Quan.

“Ge Ding has mingled with the enemy and gone into the city. Let me have five thousand soldiers.”

Zhuge Jin said, “Zhang Liao is full of guile. I think you will find him prepared for your coming. Be careful.”

As Taishi Ci urged his chief to let him go, and as Sun Quan was deeply hurt by the death of his leader, the permission was given and the force

started.

Now here it must be said that Taishi Ci and this Ge Ding were natives of the same place. Ge Ding had made his way into the city without detection, found his brother, and the two had arranged their plot.

Ge Ding also told him, saying, "Taishi Ci will come over tonight to help us. What need to be done now?"

His brother, the groom, said, "As the troops of Sun Quan are far away, I fear they cannot be here tonight, so we will make a huge bonfire of straw and then you can rush out and cry treachery. That will throw all into confusion and will give a chance to kill Zhang Liao."

"This is an excellent plan," said Ge Ding.

Now after the victory, Zhang Liao returned to the city and rewarded his soldiers, but he issued orders that no one was to doff his armor or sleep.

His attendants said, "You have gained a great victory today, and the enemy is far away. You might doff your armor and get some repose."

But Zhang Liao replied, "That is not the way of a leader. A victory is no reason for rejoicing, nor should a defeat cause sadness. If those of the South Land suspect that I am unprepared, they will attack. And we must be ready to repel them. Be ready tonight and be doubly careful."

Scarcely had he said this than a fire started and cries of "Treachery!" arose. Many rushed to tell the leader, who went out and called together his guard of about half a score. They took up a commanding position in the way.

Those about him said, "The shouts are insistent. You ought to go and see what it means."

"A whole city cannot be traitors," said Zhang Liao. "Some discontented person has frightened the soldiers. If I see anyone doing so, I will slay him."

Soon after this, Li Dian dragged up Ge Ding and his fellow traitor. After a few brief questions, they were beheaded.

Then arose a great noise: shouting and the rolling of drums was heard outside the gate.

"That means the troops of South Land are there to help," said Zhang Liao. "But we will destroy them by a simple ruse." He bade them light torches and yell "Treachery! Rebellion!" and throw open the city gates and let down the drawbridge.

When Taishi Ci saw the gates swing open, he thought his scheme was going well and in full confidence rode in at the gate. But just at the entrance a signal bomb suddenly exploded, and the enemy arrows came down on him like pelting rain. Then he knew he had fallen into a snare and turned to ride out. But he was wounded in many places. And in the pursuit that followed, more than half the troops under Taishi Ci were cut off. As he drew near his own lines, a rescue force led by Lu Xun and Dong Xi came to his aid, and Cao Cao's soldiers ceased from pursuit.

Sun Quan was exceedingly sad when he learned that his faithful general had been grievously wounded. Then Zhang Zhao prayed him to cease from war, and Sun Quan was content. They gathered in their soldiers to their ships and sailed to Nanxu and Runzhou, where they camped.

Meanwhile, Taishi Ci was dying.

When his lord went to ask how he fared, he cried, “When a worthy person is born into a turbulent world, he has to be a soldier and gird on a three-span sword to step on the mountains to mend the sky. I have not rendered great service. Why must I die before I have attained my desire?”

These were his last words. He was forty-one years of age.



Single minded and perfectly loyal,
Such was Taishi Ci, in Donglai,
Far distant frontiers rang with his exploits,
Riding or archery, all humans he excelled,
One in Bohai who admired his valor,
Cared for his mother while he was fighting,
How he roared in the battle at Shenting!
Dying, he spoke as a hero;
All through the ages people sigh for his fate.



Sun Quan was exceedingly grieved when this second of his leaders died. He gave orders to bury his remains most honorably outside the north wall of Nanxu on Beigu Hill and took his son, Taishi Heng, into his own palace to be brought up.

In Jingzhou, when Liu Bei heard of the series of misfortunes that had befallen Sun Quan and of his retirement to Nanxu, he and Zhuge Liang

discussed their plans.

Said Zhuge Liang, "I was studying the sky and saw a falling star in the northwest. The imperial family is to suffer a loss."

Zhuce Liang had scarcely said this when they brought news of the death of Liu Qi, son of Liu Biao.

Liu Bei at once began to wail bitterly.

But his adviser said to him, "Life and death are beyond our control, wherefore weep not, my lord, for grief harms the body. Rather, consider what is necessary to be done. Send someone to assume control and make arrangements for the interment."

"Who can go?" asked Liu Bei.

"No other than Guan Yu."

So they sent Guan Yu to guard the city of Xiangyang.

Liu Bei at once began to feel troubled about his promise to surrender Jingzhou upon the death of Liu Qi. Zhuge Liang did not consider this a matter of moment.

Zhuce Liang said, "I will have somewhat to say to anyone who comes to ask fulfillment of the promise."

In half a month, it was announced that Lu Su would come to mourn at the funeral.

To claim the promise one will come,
But they will send him empty home.

What reply Zhuge Liang made may be read in the next chapter.



END OF ACT XII

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XIII:

THE BONDS OF FAMILY:

LIU BEI SECURES JINGZHOU

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XIII

CHAPTER 54

THE DOWAGER MARCHIONESS SEES HER SON-IN-LAW; THE IMPERIAL
UNCLE TAKES A WORTHY CONSORT.

Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang went out of the city to welcome the envoy of the South Land and led him to the guesthouse.

After the usual greetings, Lu Su said, "Hearing of the death of your nephew, my lord Sun Quan has prepared some gifts and sent me to take his place at the funeral sacrifices. General Zhou Yu also sends regards to the Imperial Uncle and to you, Master Zhuge Liang."

Both rose at once and thanked him for the courtesy. Then the gifts were handed over and a banquet prepared, and while it was in progress, the guest brought up the real object of his visit.

"You said, Sir, that Jingzhou should be returned to us after the death of Liu Qi. Now that that event has happened, rendition becomes due, and I should be glad to know when the transfer can take place."

"We will discuss that later. In the meantime, let us go on with our wine," said Liu Bei.

So the feasting continued. Some time later, Lu Su returned to the subject, but this time, his host remained silent.

However, Zhuge Liang, changing color, said, "Lu Su, you are unreasonable. You could not wait till some other has to explain this matter to you. From the very foundation of the empire by our illustrious Ancestor, the great heritage has descended in due course till today when, unhappily, evildoers have risen among the powerful and they have seized upon such

portions as they could. But with the gods' favor and help, unity is nearly restored. My lord is a scion of the Imperial House, a great-great-grandson of Emperor Jing. Now, as the Emperor's Uncle, should he not have a share of the empire? Moreover, Liu Biao was my lord's elder brother, and there is certainly nothing extraordinary in one brother's succession to another's estate.

"What is your master? The son of a petty official on the banks of the River Qiantang, absolutely without merit, so far as the state is concerned. Just because he is powerful, he holds actual possession of six territories and eighty-one counties, which has whetted his insatiable appetite till he now desires to swallow the whole empire. The land is the estate of the Liu family, and my lord, who is of that name, has no share thereof, while your master, whose name is Sun, would dispute with and even fight him.

"Beside, at the battle at the Red Cliffs, my lord did good service and acquired great merit while his commanders risked their lives. Was it solely the strength of your southern soldiers that won that fight? Had I not brought that southeast wind that meant so much for Zhou Yu, could he have done anything? Had the South Land been conquered, it is needless to say that the two paramount beauties would now be gracing the Bronze Bird Palace. And as for yourself and other officers, insignificant though your families be, could you have been sure to survive? Just now, my lord did not reply because he was willing to believe rather that a scholar of your abilities would understand without a detailed explanation, and I trust now that you will."

This speech absolutely shut the guest's mouth for a time, and he said no word in reply. But after an interval, he said, "What you say, Zhuge Liang, I think is devoid of reason and means much unpleasantness for me."

"What unpleasantness?" asked Zhuge Liang.

The guest replied, "When Liu Bei was in serious straits at Dangyang, I conducted you across the river and introduced you to my lord. I opposed Zhou Yu when he was going to capture Jingzhou, and then it came to agreement that the place was to be ours when the young man died. And I pledged myself to that. Now how can I go back and say you break your promise? Both my lord and Zhou Yu will hold me guilty. I would not mind death so much, but I fear that my master will be very wrathful and make war on the Imperial Uncle, who will have no place of refuge, and he will look ridiculous in the eyes of the world for no reason."

Replied Zhuge Liang, "I care not for Cao Cao with his million troops and the Emperor in name at his back, and do you think I fear such a youngster as Zhou Yu? However, as it may cause you some loss of consideration, I will try to persuade my master to put the matter in writing and give you a paper to the effect that he is temporarily occupying Jingzhou as a base. When he can obtain possession of some other city, this shall be returned to you. What think you the South Land would say to this?"

"Wait till what other place was obtained?" said Lu Su.

"My master can scarcely think of attacking the Middle Land yet, but Liu Zhang in Yizhou is ignorant and weak, and my master will attack him. If he gets the western region, then this place will be given up to you."

Lu Su had no alternative and accepted the offer. Liu Bei with his own hand wrote the pledge and sealed it. Zhuge Liang, being named as guarantor, also signed the document.

"Since I belong to this side of the compact and one can hardly have a guarantor of the same party, I would trouble you, Lu Su, also to sign. It will look better when you reach the South Land again," said Zhuge Liang.

Lu Su said, "I know that your master is perfectly honorable and will adhere to the bargain." And so Lu Su signed. Then, he received the

document in formal style and took his departure. He was sent off with every mark of great respect, both Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang attending him to his boat.

There, the Directing Instructor delivered him a last exhortation, "When you see your master, speak discreetly and explain fully so as not to create a bad impression. If he rejects our document, we may get angry and we will take his whole country. The one thing now is for our two houses to live in harmony and not give our common enemy, Cao Cao, an opportunity against us."

Lu Su went down into his ship. He reached Chaisang and, there, saw Zhou Yu, who said, "Well, how did you speed with your demand for Jingzhou?"

"Here is the document," said Lu Su, giving it to Zhou Yu to read.

"You have been victimized by Zhuge Liang!" said Zhou Yu, stamping his foot with irritation. "In name, it may be temporary occupation, but in fact, it is humbug. They say the place is to be returned when they get the west. Who knows when that will be? Suppose ten years: then it will be ten years before they give us Jingzhou. What is the use of such a document as this? And you are a guarantor of its due performance! If they do not give us the city, you get into trouble. Suppose our lord finds you in the wrong: what then?"

Lu Su was dumbfounded. When he had somewhat recovered his self-possession, he said, "I think Liu Bei will be true to me."

"You, my friend, are simple and sincere. Liu Bei is a scoundrel adventurer, and Zhuge Liang is a slippery customer. They and you are utterly different."

"What then is to be done?" cried Lu Su distressfully.

“You are my dear friend, and your kindness in freely offering your store of grain to relieve my army is still fresh in my memory. Of course, I will save you. Do not be anxious, but wait a few days till we get news of what is doing on the north of the river, and then we can decide upon a plan.”

Lu Su passed some very uneasy days. Then, the scouts came back saying that, in Jingzhou, everything seemed in excellent order and the white flags were flying everywhere, while outside the city they were building a magnificent mausoleum for Lady Gan, wife of Liu Bei. All the soldiers were in mourning.

When Zhou Yu knew who was dead, he said to Lu Su, “My scheme is made. You will see Liu Bei just stand still to be bound, and we shall get Jingzhou like turning a hand.”

“What is the main spring of your plan?” said Lu Su.

“Liu Bei will want to remarry, and our lord has a sister, Sun Ren. She is a tough lady, whose guardswomen number many hundreds, all armed with weapons of war. Her apartments also are full of such things. I will write to our lord to send an intermediary to arrange that the lady shall wed Liu Bei at her family home, and thus we shall entice Liu Bei to Nanxu. But instead of marrying a wife, Liu Bei will find himself a prisoner, and then we will demand Jingzhou as ransom. When they have handed over the region, I shall find something else to say, and nothing will fall on your head.”

Lu Su was very grateful. Then, Zhou Yu wrote letters to his master, and a swift boat was chosen to take Lu Su to see the Marquis of Wu.

After the lending of Jingzhou had been discussed, Lu Su presented the document given him by Liu Bei.

“What is the use of such nonsense as this?” said Sun Quan, when he had read it.

“There is another letter from General Zhou Yu. And he says that if you will employ his scheme, you can recover Jingzhou,” replied Lu Su.

Having read that letter, Sun Quan was more pleased and began to consider who was the best person to send. Suddenly, he cried, “I have it. Lu Fan is the man to send.”

Sun Quan called Lu Fan and said to him, “I have just heard that Liu Bei has lost his wife. I have a sister whom I should like to marry to him and so make a bond of union between our two houses. Thus we should be united against Cao Cao and in support of the House of Han. You are the one man to be intermediary, and I hope you will go to Jingzhou and see to this.”

Under these orders, Lu Fan at once began to prepare his ships for the voyage and soon started.

Liu Bei was greatly distressed at the death of Lady Gan, fretting for her day and night. One day, when he was talking with his adviser, they announced the arrival of Lu Fan, who had come on a mission from the South Land.

“One of Zhou Yu’s devices,” said Zhuge Liang, smiling, “and it is all on account of this region. I will just retire behind the screen and listen. But you, my lord, agree to whatever the messenger proposes. Then let the messenger be taken to the guesthouse while we arrange what is to be done.”

So the envoy was introduced. Bows having been exchanged, host and guest being seated in due order, and the tea drunk, Liu Bei opened the

interview.

“You must have some commands for me, Sir, since you come thus.”

“News has just been received that you, O Imperial Uncle, have just been bereaved of your consort. I venture to hope you would not object to an advantageous match, and I have come to propose one. Are you disposed to listen?”

“To lose one’s wife in middle age is truly a great misfortune,” said Liu Bei. “While her body is still warm, I cannot listen to proposals for another marriage.”

Lu Fan said, “A man without a wife is like a house without a ridge pole. At your age, one should not live an incomplete life. I am come on the part of Marquis Sun Quan, who has a sister, beautiful as she is, accomplished and well-fitted to be a mate for you. Should the two families become allied as formerly were Qin and Jin, then that ruffian, Cao Cao, would never dare so much as look this way. Such an alliance would be to the benefit of both our houses and of the state. I hope, O Imperial Uncle, that you will fairly consider the proposal. However, since the young girl’s mother is dotingly fond of her, the mother does not wish her to go far away, and so I must ask you to come into our country for the wedding.”

“Does the Marquis know of your coming?”

“How dare I come without his knowledge?”

“I am no longer young,” said Liu Bei. “I am fifty and grizzled. This fair damsel, the sister of the Marquis, is now in the flower of her youth and no mate for me.”

“Although the damsel is a woman, in mind she surpasses many a man, and she has said she will never wed anyone who is unknown to fame. Now, Sir, you are renowned throughout the four seas. Marriage with you would

be the chaste maiden mating with the born gentleman. Of what consequence is the difference in age?"

"Sir, stay here awhile, and I will give you a reply tomorrow," said Liu Bei.

So that day, the envoy was entertained at a banquet and then conducted to the guesthouse to repose, while, late as it was, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang discussed their plans.

"I knew what he had come about," said the adviser. "While he was talking, I consulted the oracle and obtained an excellent sign. Wherefore, you may accept the proposal and send Sun Qian back with this envoy to arrange the details. When the promise has been ratified, we will choose a day and you shall go to complete the ceremony."

"How can I thus go into enemy territory? Zhou Yu has wanted to slay me for a long time."

"Let Zhou Yu employ all his ruses. Think you he can get beyond me? Let me act for you, and his calculations will always fail halfway. Once Sun Quan's sister is in your power, there will be no fear for Jingzhou."

Still, Liu Bei doubted in his mind. However, Sun Qian was sent to the South Land, with definite instructions, and traveled thither with Lu Fan.

At the interview, Sun Quan said, "I wish my sister could induce Liu Bei to live here with us. He would come to no harm."

Sun Qian took his leave. And returning to Jingzhou, he told the bridegroom-elect, saying, "Sun Quan's sole desire is for our lord to go over and complete the marriage."

However, Liu Bei feared and would not go.

Zhuce Liang said, "I have prepared three plans, but I need Zhao Yun to carry them out. He will be sent as your guard."

So Zhuge Liang called in Zhao Yun, gave him three silken bags, and whispered in his ear, saying, "Here are three schemes enclosed in three bags. When you escort our lord to the South Land, you will take these with you and act as they direct."

Zhao Yun hid the three silken bags in his breast so that they should be at hand when required.

Zhuge Liang next sent the wedding gifts, and when these had been received, the preliminaries were settled.

It was then the early winter of the fourteenth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 209). The bridegroom-elect, his escort, and the intermediary left the city of Jingzhou with a fleet of ten fast ships to sail down the river to Nanxu. Zhuge Liang remained to guard and rule the region. But Liu Bei was far from feeling comfortable.

They arrived, and the ships were made fast. This done, the time had come for the first of the silken bags to be opened. And so it was. Thereupon, Zhao Yun gave each of his five hundred guards his instructions, and they went their several ways. Next Zhao Yun told Liu Bei what he was to do: to pay his visit first to the State Patriarch Qiao, who was the father-in-law of Sun Ce and of Zhou Yu.

The State Patriarch Qiao resided in Nanxu and to his house, leading sheep and bearing wine jars, went the bridegroom-elect. Having made his obeisance, Liu Bei explained that as Lu Fan had arranged, he had come to marry a wife.

In the meantime, the five hundred guards, all in gala dress, had scattered over the city place buying all sorts of things, as they said, for the

wedding of Liu Bei with the daughter of the Sun House. They spread the news far and wide, and the whole town talked about it.

When Sun Quan heard of Liu Bei's arrival, he bade Lu Fan wait upon him and take him to the guesthouse. Meanwhile, the State Patriarch Qiao went to the Dowager Marchioness, mother of Sun Quan, to congratulate her on the happy event.

"What happy event?" ejaculated the old lady.

"The betrothal of your beloved daughter to Liu Bei. And he has arrived, too, as surely you know."

"My poor old self does not know," said the Dowager. "I have heard nothing of all this."

She at once summoned her son and also sent her servants out into the town to see what was going about.

They quickly returned to say: "The whole city knows of the coming wedding, and the bridegroom is now at the guesthouse. Moreover, he has come with a large escort, and they are spending freely, buying pork and mutton and fruits, all in readiness for the wedding feasting. Lu Fan and Sun Qian are the intermediaries on each side, and they are in the guesthouse, too."

The Dowager Marchioness was terribly taken aback and upset so that, when Sun Quan arrived, he found his mother beating her breast and weeping bitterly.

"What has disturbed you, Mother?" asked he.

"What you have just done," said she. "You have treated me as a nonentity. When my elder sister lay dying, what did she tell you?"

Sun Quan began to be frightened, but he said boldly, "Please speak out plainly, Mother. What is this great sorrow?"

“When a son is grown, he takes a wife; when a girl is old enough, she goes to her husband. And that is right and proper. But I am the mother, and you ought to have told me that your sister was to become the wife of Liu Bei. Why did you keep me in the dark? It was my place to promise her in marriage.”

“Whence comes this story?” said the Marquis, really much frightened.

“Do you pretend ignorance? There is not a soul in the city who does not know! But you have succeeded in keeping me in the dark.”

“I heard it several days ago,” said the State Patriarch Qiao. “And I came just now to offer my felicitations.”

“There is no such thing,” said Sun Quan. “It is just one of the ruses of Zhou Yu to get hold of Jingzhou. He has used this means to inveigle Liu Bei here and hold him captive till Jingzhou is restored to us. And if they will not give it back, then Liu Bei will be put to death. That is the plot. There is no real marriage.”

But the Dowager was in a rage and vented her wrath by abusing Zhou Yu. She said, “Zhou Yu is a petty sort of governor over the six territories and eighty-one counties, if he cannot find any means of recovering one region except making use of my child as a decoy. Truly this is a fine deed: to spoil the whole of my child’s life and condemn her to perpetual widowhood because he wants to use the fair-damsel ruse to slay a man! Who will ever come to talk of marriage with her after this?”

Said the State Patriarch Qiao, “By this means, you may indeed recover Jingzhou, but you will be a shameful laughingstock to all the world. What can be done?”

Sun Quan had nothing to say. He could only hang his head while the Dowager abused his general.

The State Patriarch Qiao tried to soothe her, saying, "After all, Liu Bei, the Imperial Uncle, is a scion of the reigning family. You can do nothing better now than to welcome him as a son-in-law and not let this ugly story get abroad."

"I am afraid their ages do not match," interposed Sun Quan.

"Liu Bei is a very famous man," said the State Patriarch Qiao. "There can be no shame in having such a son-in-law."

"I have never seen him," said the Dowager. "Arrange that I may get a look at him tomorrow at the Sweet Dew Temple. If he displeases me, you may work your will on him. But if I am satisfied with him, then I shall simply let the girl marry him."

Now Sun Quan was above all things filial and at once agreed to what his mother said. He went out, called in Lu Fan, and told him to arrange a banquet for the morrow at the temple so that the Dowager Marchioness might see the bridegroom.

"Why not order Jia Hua to station some men in the wings of the temple? Then, if the Dowager be not pleased, we can call them out and fall upon him," said Lu Fan.

Accordingly, the ambush was prepared and five hundred ruffians posted to act as the Dowager's attitude might determine.

When the State Patriarch Qiao took his leave and had reached his house, he sent to tell Liu Bei, saying, "Tomorrow, the Marquis and the Dowager Marchioness wished to see you. So be careful!"

Liu Bei and his faithful henchman discussed their plans.

Zhao Yun said, "The morrow bodes rather ill than well. However, your escort shall be there."

Next day, the Dowager Marchioness and the State Patriarch Qiao went to the Temple of Sweet Dew as had been arranged. Sun Quan came with a number of his strategists. When all were assembled, Lu Fan was sent to the guesthouse to request Liu Bei to come. He obeyed the summons, but as a precaution, he put on a light coat of mail under his brocaded robe. His followers, too, took their swords upon their backs and followed close. He mounted his steed, and the cavalcade set out for the temple. At the door of the temple, he met Sun Quan, on whom the visitor's brave demeanor was not lost. After they had exchanged salutations, Sun Quan led Liu Bei into the presence of his mother.

"Just the son-in-law for me!" said the Dowager, delighted with the appearance of Liu Bei.

"He has the air of an emperor and a look like the sun," remarked the State Patriarch Qiao. "When one remembers also that his fair fame has spread over the whole earth, you may well be congratulated on getting such a noble son-in-law."

Liu Bei bowed, in acknowledgment of his reception. Soon after they were all seated at the banquet in the temple, Zhao Yun entered and took his place beside Liu Bei.

"Who is this?" asked the Dowager.

"This is Zhao Yun of Changshan."

"Then he must be the hero of Dangyang, who saved the little Liu Shan."

"Yes, this is he," replied Liu Bei.

"A fine general!" said the Dowager, and she gave him wine.

Presently, Zhao Yun said to his master, "I have seen a lot of armed ruffians hidden away in the purlieus of the temple. They can be there for no good, and you should ask the Dowager to have them sent away."

Thereupon, Liu Bei knelt at the feet of the Dowager and, weeping, said, "If you would slay me, let it be here."

"Why do you say this?" asked she.

"Because there are assassins in hiding in the wings of the temple. What are they there for if not to kill me?"

The Dowager wrathfully turned on Sun Quan, "What are armed men doing there today, when Liu Bei is to become my son-in-law and the pair my son and daughter?"

Sun Quan said he did not know and sent Lu Fan to inquire. Lu Fan put the blame on Jia Hua. The Dowager summoned him and upbraided him severely. He had nothing to say, and she told them to put him to death.

But Liu Bei interceded, saying, "The General's death will do me harm and make it hard for me to stay at your side."

The State Patriarch Qiao also interceded, and she only ordered the general out of her presence. His subordinates also scattered and ran like frightened rats.

By and by, strolling out of the banquet room onto the temple grounds, Liu Bei came to a boulder. Drawing his sword he looked up to heaven and prayed, saying, "If I am to return to Jingzhou and achieve my intent to become a chief ruler, then may I cleave this boulder asunder with my sword. But if I am to meet my doom in this place, then may the sword fail to cut this stone."

Raising his sword, he smote the boulder. Sparks flew in all directions, and the boulder lay split in twain.

It happened that Sun Quan had seen the blow, and he said, “Why do you thus hate that stone?”

Liu Bei replied, “I am near my fifth decade and have so far failed to rid the state of evil. I greatly regret my failure. Now I have been accepted by the Dowager as her son-in-law, and this is a critical moment in my life. So I implored of Heaven a portent that I might destroy Cao Cao as I would that boulder and restore the dynasty. You saw what happened.”

That is only to deceive me, thought Sun Quan. Drawing his own sword, he said, “And I also ask of Heaven an omen, that if I am to destroy Cao Cao, I may also cut this rock.” So he spoke. But in his secret heart, he prayed, *If I am to recover Jingzhou and extend my borders, may the stone be cut in twain.*

He smote the stone, and it split in twain. And to this day, there are cross-cuts in the stone, which is still preserved.



One who saw this relic wrote a poem:

The shining blades fell and the rock was shorn
through,
The metal rang clear and the sparks widely flew.
Thus fate then declared for the dynasties two,
And the tripartite rule there began.



Both put up their swords and returned hand in hand to the banquet hall.

After some more courses, Sun Qian gave his master a warning look, and Liu Bei said, "I pray you excuse me, as my drinking powers are very small."

Wherefore, Sun Quan escorted him to the gate.

As they walked down, looking at high land and rolling river spreading in glorious panorama before their eyes, Liu Bei exclaimed, "Really: this is the finest scene in the whole world!"



These words are recorded on a tablet in the Temple of the Sweet Dew, and one who read them wrote a poem:

From the riverside hills the rain clears off,
And the black clouds roll away,
And this is the place of joy and mirth
And never can sorrow stay.
And here two heroes of ages past
Decided their parts to play,
And the lofty heights flung back wind and wave
Then, as they do today.



Yes, they stood both entranced by the beautiful scene. And gradually along the vast river, the wind whipped the waves into snowy foam and raised them high toward heaven. And in the midst of the waves appeared a tiny leaf of a boat riding over the waves, as if all was perfect calm.

“The northern people are riders and the southern people sailors. It is said quite true,” sighed Liu Bei.

Sun Quan, hearing this remark, took it as a reproach to his horsemanship. Bidding his servants lead up his steed, Sun Quan leaped into the saddle and set off, full gallop, down the hill. Then wheeling, he came up again at the same speed.

“So the southerners cannot ride, eh?” said Sun Quan, laughing.

Not to be outdone, Liu Bei lifted the skirts of his robe, jumped upon his horse and repeated the feat.

The two steeds stood side by side on the declivity, the riders flourishing their whips and laughing.



Thence forward that hillside was known as the “Slope Where the Horses Stood,” and a poem was written about it:

Their galloping steeds were of noble breed,
And both of spirit high,
And the riders twain from the hill-crest gazed
At the river rolling by.
One of them mastered the western mountains.
One ruled by the eastern sea;
And the hill to this very day

Still is the Slope Where the Horses Stood.



When they rode side by side into Nanxu, the people met them with acclamations. Liu Bei made his way to the guesthouse and there sought advice from Sun Qian as to the date of the wedding.

Sun Qian advised, "It should be fixed as early as possible so that no further complications could arise."

So next day, Liu Bei went to the State Patriarch Qiao and told him in plain words, "Many the people of this place mean harm to me, and I cannot stay here long. I must return soon."

"Do not be anxious," said the State Patriarch Qiao. "I will tell the Dowager Marchioness, and she will protect you."

Liu Bei bowed to express his thanks.

The State Patriarch Qiao saw the Dowager, and she was very angry when she heard the reason for Liu Bei's desire to leave.

"Who would dare harm my son-in-law?" cried she.

But she made Liu Bei move into the library of the palace as a precaution, and she chose a day for the celebration of the wedding. But his soldiers could not keep guard at the library and were removed from his commands. Liu Bei explained to his hostess, and when she understood this, she gave her son-in-law and his people rooms in her own palace so that he might be quite safe.

Liu Bei was very happy, and there were fine banquets, and the bride and bridegroom duly plighted their troth. And when it grew late and the guests had gone, the newly-wedded pair walked through the two lines of red torches to the nuptial apartment.

To his extreme surprise, Liu Bei found the chambers furnished with spears and swords and banners and flags, while every waiting-maid had girded on a sword.

Walls hung with spears the bridegroom saw,
And armed waiting-maids;
His heart fell back on all its fears
Of well-laid ambuscades.

What happened will be related in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XIII

CHAPTER 55

LIU BEI ROUSES THE SPIRIT OF LADY SUN; ZHUGE LIANG A SECOND TIME ANGERS ZHOU YU.

The bridegroom turned pale. Bridal apartments lined with weapons of war and waiting maids armed!

But the housekeeper of the lady said, "Do not be frightened, O Honorable One! My lady has always had a taste for warlike things, and her maids have all been taught fencing as a pastime. That is all it is."

"Not the sort of thing a wife should ever look at," said Liu Bei. "It makes me feel cold, and you may have them removed for a time."

The housekeeper went to her mistress and said, "The weapons in your chamber displease the handsome one. May we remove them?"

Lady Sun laughed, saying, "Afraid of a few weapons after half-a-life's time spent in slaughter!" But she ordered their removal and bade the maids take off their swords while they were at work.

That night, Liu Bei and Lady Sun conversed under the moonlight, and the night passed happily enough.

Next day, Liu Bei distributed gifts among the maids to secure their good will. He also sent Sun Qian to Jingzhou with news of the wedding, while he gave himself up to feasting and enjoyment. The Dowager loved him more every day.

The results of the plot to destroy Liu Bei were thus very different from the originators' intention. Sun Quan sent to his general:

“My mother insisted upon marrying her daughter to Liu Bei, and so by juggling with the fictitious, we have made it real. What is to be done?”

The news troubled Zhou Yu day and night, but eventually he thought of another scheme which he embodied in a letter sent to his master. Here is the outline of the missive:

“Contrary to expectation, the plot that I, Zhou Yu, contrived has turned the wrong way. However, since by juggling with deceit, we have ended in a solid truth, our future plans must start from the actual present facts. To the boldness of the adventurer Liu Bei is added the aid of such great leaders as Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun, not to mention that he has a strategist like Zhuge Liang. He is not the man to remain long in a lowly position. Wherefore I can think of no better plan than to enervate him by surrounding him with softness and keeping him in the South Land, a prisoner of luxury. Therefore, build for him a fine palace to blunt the edge of his determination and surround him with sensuous luxury. In this way, the affection of his Brothers will be alienated, and Zhuge Liang will be driven away. When this result has been attained, we can smite him and so end a great matter. If we be at all careless, I fear the recumbent dragon may fly to the skies; it is no beast to be kept in a pond. My lord, I pray you consider this thoroughly.”

The letter was shown to Zhang Zhao who said, “My idea is identical with his. Liu Bei began life in a humble position and for years has been a

wanderer. He has never tasted the delights of wealth. Give him the means of luxury: a beautiful dwelling, fair women, gold, and silken attire. As he enjoys them, the thoughts of Zhuge Liang and his Brothers will fade away and they, on their side, will be filled with rancor. Thus can we lay our plans for recovering Jingzhou. I recommend action as Zhou Yu says and quickly.”

Sun Quan then set about redecorating the Eastern Palace and laying out the grounds. He filled the rooms with beautiful furniture for his sister and her husband. He also sent fair damsels and musicians by the score, many beautiful vessels of gold and silver, and silken stuffs. And his mother was delighted at his kindness to her son-in-law.

Indeed, Liu Bei was soon so immersed in sensuous pleasure that he gave no thought to return. Zhao Yun and the company under him led an idle life in the front portion of the Eastern Palace, save that at times they went outside the city for archery and horse-racing. And thus passed the year.

Suddenly, Zhao Yun remembered the orders he had received and the three bags with the plans in them. It was time to open the second one, for the end of the year was nigh. His orders were only to open the third when danger was very near and there appeared no way out.

As already remarked, the year was drawing to a close, and Zhao Yun saw his lord daily becoming more and more the slave of pleasure. Liu Bei never appeared among his guards now. So the bag was opened, and in pursuance of the wonderful scheme thereby discovered, Zhao Yun went to the hall of the palace and asked to see his master.

The maid in attendance went within and said, “Zhao Yun has some important matter on which to see the master.”

Liu Bei called him in and asked what the business was.

Zhao Yun assumed an attitude of great concern and said, "My lord, you are living happily secluded in these beautiful apartments. Do you never think of Jingzhou?"

"But what is the matter that you seem so disturbed?" asked Liu Bei.

"Today early, Zhuge Liang sent a messenger to say that Cao Cao was trying to avenge his last defeat and was leading five hundred thousand troops to attack Jingzhou, which was in great danger. And he wished you to return."

"I must speak to my wife," said Liu Bei.

"If you consult her, she will be unwilling for you to return. It would be better to say nothing but to start this evening. Delay may do great damage."

"Retire for a time. I must act discreetly," said Liu Bei.

Zhao Yun urged the need to return several times more, but finally went away.

Liu Bei went into his wife's rooms and began to weep silently.

Seeing his tears, Lady Sun said, "Why are you so sad, my husband?"

Liu Bei replied, "I have been driven hither and thither all my life. I was never able to do my duty to my parents, nor have I been able to sacrifice to my ancestors. I have been very unfilial. The new year is at hand, and its approach disquiets me greatly."

"Do not try to deceive me," said Lady Sun. "I heard, and I know all. Just now, Zhao Yun came to tell you Jingzhou was threatened, and you wish to return home. That is why you put forward this excuse."

Then, Liu Bei fell on his knees and said, "Why should I dissemble, O Wife, since you know? I do not wish to go, but if Jingzhou be lost, I shall be

an object of ridicule to everyone. I do desire to go, but I cannot leave you. Now you know why I am grieved.”

She replied, “I am your handmaid, and whithersoever you go, it is my duty to follow.”

“Yes, your heart is right. But the difficulty is your mother and the Marquis. They will be unwilling. If you would have pity on me and let me go for a time...” And again the tears gushed forth.

“Do not be so sad, my husband,” said Lady Sun. “I will implore my mother to let us go, and she will surely allow it.”

“Even supposing the Dowager permits, I am sure the Marquis will hinder.”

Lady Sun said nothing for a long time while she weighed the matter thoroughly. Presently, she spoke, “On New Year’s Day, you and I will go to court and present our congratulations. Then we will give the excuse of a sacrifice on the riverbank and go away without formal leave. Will that suit you?”

Liu Bei knelt at her feet and expressed his gratitude. “I should be never so grateful,” said he. “Dead or alive, I would remember your love. But this must be a perfect secret.”

This having been decided and the arrangements made, Liu Bei gave Zhao Yun secret orders, saying, “Lead your company out of the city and be on the road on New Year’s morn. We are going away.”

Sun Quan held a grand court on the New Year’s Day of the fifteenth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 210).

Liu Bei and his bride went into the Dowager Marchioness' presence, and Lady Sun said, "My husband has been thinking of his ancestors, who lie in the county of Zhuo, and grieves that he cannot do his duty by them. Today we wish to go to the riverside and offer sacrifice toward the north. It is our duty to inform you."

"A very filial proceeding," said the Dowager. "I should not think of stopping you. Although you have never known your husband's parents, you may go with him to sacrifice as it is proper for a wife to do."

Both thanked the Dowager Marchioness and went out, rejoicing at having so far hoodwinked Sun Quan. Lady Sun got into her carriage, taking only a little clothing with her, while Liu Bei followed with a small escort. They went out of the city of Nanxu and met Zhao Yun at the place arranged. Then, with a guard in front and rear, they left the precincts of the city, traveling as quickly as they could.

That day, at the New Year banquet, Sun Quan drank freely so that he had to be helped to his chamber, and the guests left. Before very long, the escape of the fugitives became known, but it was then dark, and when they tried to tell Sun Quan, they could not rouse him. He slept heavily until the fifth watch.

The next morning, when Sun Quan heard the story, he asked advice of his counselors.

Zhang Zhao said, "They have gotten away today, but trouble will surely come of it. Therefore, pursue after them without loss of time."

So Chen Wu and Pan Zhang, with five hundred veterans, were sent out with orders to use all speed, both by day and by night, and bring back the

fugitives. They left.

Sun Quan's anger burned hot against Liu Bei. In his wrath, he seized his jade inkstone and dashed it to the ground, where it shattered to pieces.

Said Cheng Pu, "My lord, your wrath is in vain, for I do not think your generals will catch the runaways."

"Will they dare to disobey my order?" said Sun Quan.

"Our young lady has always delighted to look upon war and is very fierce and determined. All the officers fear her. Now, she has gone with her husband of her own free will, and those sent in pursuit, if once they look upon her countenance, will not dare to lay hands on her."

Sun Quan's wrath burned the more fiercely at these words. He drew the sword girded at his side and called up Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai, saying, "You two take this sword and bring back the heads of my sister and Liu Bei. And if you do not, I will put you to death."

With this order, they set out in pursuit, leading a whole thousand troops.

Meanwhile, Liu Bei and his wife were pressing forward with all speed. When night fell, they rested for a time by the roadside, but not for long. Just as they reached the confines of Chaisang, they turned and saw a great cloud of dust, and the soldiers said that a force was coming in pursuit.

"What shall we do if they come up with us?" said Liu Bei anxiously to Zhao Yun.

"My lord, you go on in front, and I will prevent pursuit."

As they turned the foot of a hill, they saw a troop of soldiers blocking their road in front.

Two generals were there, and they bellowed, "Liu Bei, dismount and yield yourself captive. We are here by order of General Zhou Yu, and you

have kept us waiting long!”

Now the thought had come to Zhou Yu that Liu Bei would try to flee, and so he had sent Xu Sheng and Ding Feng, with three thousand troops, to intercept him at this critical spot. They had made a camp there and kept a lookout from the hilltops, for Zhou Yu had calculated that Liu Bei would certainly pass that way. So when Liu Bei and his cavalcade appeared, they all buckled on their arms and barred the way.

Greatly fearing, Liu Bei rode back to consult Zhao Yun, to whom he said, “In front, a force barring the road; in rear, pursuers. There is no escape. What can we do?”

“Do not be alarmed, my lord. The Directing Instructor gave me three plans enclosed in three silken bags. Two have been used and have answered admirably. There is yet the third, and my orders were to open the bag in such a strait as this. This is a day of great danger such as calls me to open the bag.”

Thereupon, Zhao Yun opened the bag and handed it to Liu Bei.

As soon as Liu Bei had seen the contents, he hastened to Lady Sun’s carriage and began to weep, saying, “I have something private to say, and I must tell you.”

“What have you to tell me, my husband? Tell me the whole truth,” replied she.

“Your brother and Zhou Yu formerly made a plot for you to marry me: not for your sake, but to get me into their power and hold me so that they might recover Jingzhou. They were set on my murder, and you were the bait with which to hook me. Careless of consequences I came, for I knew that the spirit of a heroine dwelt in your bosom and you would pity me. Lately, I heard that harm was intended me, and so I made danger to Jingzhou the

excuse to escape. Happily for me, you have remained true and come with me. But now the Marquis is pursuing us, and Zhou Yu's soldiers are in front. Only you, my wife, can extricate us from this danger; if you refuse, then slay me where I stand that I may thus show my gratitude for your kindness."

Lady Sun grew angry and said, "Then does my brother forget that I am his sister? How will he ever look me in the face? I can extricate us from this danger."

Thereupon, she bade her people push the carriage to the front. She rolled up the curtains and herself called out, "Xu Sheng, Ding Feng, are you turned traitors then?"

The two generals slid out of their saddles, dropped their arms, and stood meekly in front of the carriage.

"We are no traitors," said they. "We have the Commander-in-Chief's orders to camp here and await Liu Bei."

"Zhou Yu is an interfering scoundrel," cried she. "We of the Land of the South have never harmed you, and Liu Bei, the Uncle of the Great Family, is my husband. I have already told my mother and my brother of our journey, and now I find you with an army at the foot of these hills, preventing our passage. Is it that you would plunder us of our valuables?"

The two generals mumbled dissent. They would not dare such a thing. "We pray you, O Lady, stay your anger. This is no plan of ours. We do but obey our General's orders."

"So you fear Zhou Yu and not me!" cried she scornfully. "Think you that if he slays you, I will not slay him?" She broke into a torrent of abuse of Zhou Yu. Then she bade them push her carriage forward.

The two leaders thought within themselves, *We are but men of lowly rank. We dare not dispute with Lady Sun.* Beside, they saw Zhao Yun was bursting with wrath. So they ordered their troops to stand aside and leave the road clear.

The cavalcade had only gone a few miles when up came the pursuers. The two generals told the newcomers what had happened.

“You were wrong to let them pass,” said Chen Wu and Pan Zhang. “We have orders from the Marquis himself to arrest them.”

Thereupon, all four went in pursuit.

When the noise of the approaching force reached the ears of Liu Bei, he said to his wife, “They are again pursuing us. What now?”

“Husband, go on in front. Zhao Yun and I will keep them off.”

So Liu Bei and a small company went on toward the riverbank, while Zhao Yun reined up beside the lady’s carriage and set out his troops ready for battle. And when the four generals came up, they dismounted and stood with folded arms.

“What are you doing here, Generals?” asked Lady Sun.

“We have orders from our lord to request you and Liu Bei to return.”

Calmly but bitterly, she said, “So this is the sort of fools you are! You would make dissension between brother and sister. But I am a wife on my way to my husband’s home. Nor am I leaving clandestinely, for I have my mother’s gracious permission. Now we, husband and wife, are going to Jingzhou. If even my brother were here himself, he would let us pass in all politeness. But you, because you have weapons in your hands, would slay us!”

She abused the four men to their faces so that they looked from one to another in shame. And each in his heart thought, *Say what one will; after*

all, they two are brother and sister, and the Dowager Marchioness is the controlling power. Sun Quan is most obedient and would never dare oppose his mother's decision. When the reaction comes, then indeed we shall certainly be found in the wrong. We had better be kind."

Another thing was that one of the two they sought, Liu Bei, was not there, and Zhao Yun looked angry and dangerous. Finally, muttering to themselves, they gave way and, with one accord, retired and left the road open. Lady Sun passed through.

"We four will go to see the Commander-in-Chief and report," said Xu Sheng.

But that did not please them all, and they stood irresolute. Presently, they saw a column of troops sweeping down on them like a hurricane. These were Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai with their company.

"Have you fellows seen Liu Bei?" they cried as they rushed up.

"He has just passed along."

"Why did you not arrest him?"

"Because of what Lady Sun said."

"That is just as the Marquis feared, and so he gave us this sword and told us first to slay his sister and then Liu Bei. And if we disobey, he will put us to death."

"What can be done? They are far away by now."

Jiang Qin said, "After all, they are but a few and on foot. They cannot travel very fast. Let Xu Sheng and Ding Feng go to Zhou Yu to tell him, and he can send fast boats to pursue them on the river while we follow up on the bank. We must get them either on water or land, and we must not listen to what they say." Whereupon, two went back to report and four to the river bank.

Meanwhile, Liu Bei had gotten a long way from Chaisang and reached Loving Shore. He now felt calmer. He went along the bank of the river seeking a boat, but there was no craft on the broad bosom of the stream. He bowed his head in deep sorrow.

Zhao Yun bade him be of good courage, saying, "My lord, you have just escaped from the tiger's jaws and had not far to go. Moreover, I suspect Zhuge Liang has something prepared for us."

But his master was despondent. His thoughts were back to the pleasures he had enjoyed but a few hours since in the house of his wife, and the tears rolled down his cheeks.



A poem has been written on this episode:

By the bank of the deep flowing Great River
Once was a wedding,
And the ruling houses of two states yet to be
Were allied by marriage.
See the beautiful maiden stepping slowly
To the golden bridal chamber!
Yet was the marriage but a ruse.
Its author vainly imagined that a hero,
Sinking in amorous toils,
Would forget his high intent.



Liu Bei bade Zhao Yun go along the bank to seek some boats. Then, the soldiers told him there was a huge cloud of dust on the road. Ascending one of the hills, he looked back whence they had come and saw the whole earth as if it were covered with an advancing host.

He sighed and said, "We have fled before them now for days, worn out our soldiers and jaded our horses, and all to die in a strange place."

He watched the enemy coming nearer and nearer. Then, as things began to look most desperate, he saw a line of some twenty boats all in the act of setting their sails.

"By good luck, here are some ships," said Zhao Yun. "Let us get on board, row to the further bank, and see what can be done."

Liu Bei and his bride hastened down the bank and went onto a ship. The soldiers were embarked. Then they saw in the hold of the ship someone in Daoist dress.

That person came up with a smile, saying, "My lord, again, you see Zhuge Liang. He has waited a long time."

All the soldiers on board were from Jingzhou, and Liu Bei rejoiced at the sudden happy turn of affairs.

Before long, the four pursuing leaders reached the bank.

Zhuce Liang pointed to them and laughed, saying, "I foresaw this a long time ago. You may return and tell Zhou Yu not to use the 'Fair Damsel Trick' again."

Those on the bank sent a flight of arrows at the ships, but they were already too far away. The four generals on the bank looked very foolish.

As the boats were sailing along, a great noise was heard on the river behind them, and there appeared a huge fleet of warships, sailing under the flag of Zhou Yu. He also was there, in command of the fleet, and he was supported by Huang Gai and Han Dang. They seemed like a drove of horses and came along swift as a falling star. They gained on the fugitives rapidly.

Zhuge Liang ordered the boats to row over to the north bank, and the party landed. They had started off away from the shore before Zhou Yu could land. Zhou Yu's marines, except the leaders, were all afoot, but they kept up the pursuit, following as quickly as they could. Zhou Yu led the pursuit, closely followed by Huang Gai, Han Dang, Xu Sheng, and Ding Feng.

When Zhou Yu's force reached the borders of Huangzhou, Liu Bei and his party were not far away, and so they pressed the pursuit. But there were only horses for a few leaders in front, and suddenly the rolling of drums struck Zhou Yu's ears, and from out a gully dashed a troop of swordsmen led by Guan Yu. Zhou Yu was too surprised and unprepared to do anything but flee.

Zhou Yu fled for his life, and Guan Yu pursued. At different points, Liu Bei's generals Huang Zhong and Wei Yan came out and attacked, so that the troops of the South Land suffered a great defeat, and Zhou Yu barely escaped. As he came to the river and was going down into his ship, the soldiers of Liu Bei on the bank jeered at him on account of the miscarriage of his scheme, shouting, "General Zhou Yu has given Uncle Liu Bei a wife and has lost his soldiers!"

Zhou Yu was so annoyed that he would have gone up the bank to fight again, but his generals restrained him. He uttered, "My schemes are a failure and a defeat, and how can I face my master again?"

All at once, he cried aloud and fell back in a swoon. His wound had reopened. The generals came to his help, but it was long before he recovered consciousness.

Twice had he played his trick
And twice had he lost the game;
His heart was full of resentment,
He was overwhelmed with shame.

The fate of Zhou Yu will appear in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XIII

CHAPTER 56

CAO CAO FEASTS IN THE BRONZE BIRD TOWER; ZHUGE LIANG
PROVOKES ZHOU YU A THIRD TIME.

The ambushade into which Zhou Yu had fallen had been prepared by the orders of Zhuge Liang and was a trifecta. However, Huang Gai and Han Dang contrived to get clear and found refuge in the ships, though with the loss of many troops. When Zhou Yu was in safety and looked about him, he saw Liu Bei and Lady Sun safely resting on a hilltop. How could such a sight fail to put him in a rage? And with the access of rage, his wound, not yet healed, burst open once again. He swooned and fell. They raised him, and his ship set sail.

Zhuge Liang ordered no pursuit, the southern fleet departed undisturbed, and Liu Bei proceeded to Jingzhou City, where were great rejoicings in honor of his recent marriage.

Meanwhile, Zhou Yu went to Chaisang, while Jiang Qin and those with him bore to Nanxu the sad tidings to Sun Quan, who was angry beyond words; his first thought was to send an army under Cheng Pu to take Jingzhou. Zhou Yu also wrote from his sick bed urging his lord to take vengeance.

But Zhang Zhao knew better and said it could not be done. Said he, "Cao Cao has never forgotten his defeat at the Red Cliffs, but he dares not attempt to avenge himself while the Sun family are friendly with Liu Bei. If

in any moment of anger you two fall upon each other, Cao Cao will certainly seize the opportunity and your position will be dangerous.”

Gu Yong supported Zhang Zhao, saying, “Beyond all doubt, Cao Cao has his spies here. As soon as he hears of any rift in the friendship between the Sun and Liu families, he will desire to come to an understanding with the latter, and Liu Bei, who fears your power, will accept his offer and take his side. Such an alliance will be a continual menace to the land south of the river.

“No! The plan for the occasion is to secure the friendship of Liu Bei by memorializing that he be made Imperial Protector of Jingzhou. This will make Cao Cao afraid to send any army against the South Land. At the same time, it will raise kindly feelings in the heart of Liu Bei and win his support. You will be able to find someone who will provoke a quarrel between Cao Cao and Liu Bei and set them at each other, and that will be your opportunity. In this way, you will succeed.”

“These are good words,” said Sun Quan, “but have I a messenger who can accomplish such a mission?”

“There is such a man, one whom Cao Cao respects and loves.”

“Who is he?”

“What prevents you from employing Hua Xin? He is ready to hand.”

Wherefore Hua Xin was given letters and bidden go to the capital, Xuchang, whither he proceeded at once and sought to see Cao Cao. They told him that Cao Cao and all his friends were at Yejun, celebrating the completion of the Bronze Bird Tower. So thither he went.

Cao Cao had indeed never forgotten his great defeat at the Red Cliffs and nourished schemes to avenge it, but he feared the combination of his two chief enemies, and that fear restrained him.

In the spring of the fifteenth year (AD 210), the great Tower was completed, and Cao Cao invited a vast assembly to celebrate its inauguration with banquets and rejoicings. The feast was on the bank of River Zhang.

The Bronze Bird Terrace stood in the center, flanked by two others named the Terrace of the Jade Dragon and the Terrace of the Golden Phoenix. Each tower was a hundred spans high, and two bridges connected them. Gold and jade vied with each other in the many apartments.

At the opening ceremony, Cao Cao wore a golden headdress inlaid with jewels and a robe of green-brocaded silk, girded with a belt of jade. On his feet were pearl-encrusted shoes. So clad, he took his seat as host, while his officers, civil and military, were drawn up below the terrace.

For the military officers was arranged an archery competition, and one of his attendants brought forth a robe of red crimson Xichuan silk as a prize. This was suspended from one of the drooping branches of a willow tree, beneath which was the target. The distance was a hundred paces. The competitors were divided into two bands, those of Cao Cao's own family being dressed in red and the others in green. They all had carved bows and long arrows and were mounted. They stood holding in their steeds till the signal should be given for the games to begin. Each was to shoot one arrow, and the robe was the guerdon for hitting the target in the red; misses were to pay a forfeit of drinking a cup of cold water.

As soon as the signal was given, a red-robed youth rode quickly forth. He was Cao Xiu. Swiftly he galloped to and fro thrice. Then he adjusted the

notch of his arrow to the string, pulled the bow to its full, and the arrow flew straight to the bull's eye.

The clang of the gongs and the roll of the drums announced the feat, which astonished them all. And Cao Cao, as he sat on the terrace, was delighted.

"A very promising colt of my own," said he to those about him, and he sent a messenger for the red robe that the winner might receive it from his own hands.

But suddenly from the green side rode out one who cried, "It were more fitting to let outsiders compete for the Prime Minister's silken robe. It is not right that members of the family monopolize the contest."

Cao Cao looked at the speaker, who was Wen Ping. And some of the officers cried, "Let us see what his shooting is like!"

So Wen Ping fitted an arrow to the string and fired also from horseback while galloping. To the surprise of the onlookers, he also made a bull's eye, which was honored by another salute from gongs and drums.

"Quickly bring me the robe," cried Wen Ping.

But at once from the ranks of the red-robed, another competitor dashed forward, shouting fiercely, "How can you win what has been already won? But let me show you how I can shoot an arrow that shall overcome both your shots."

He drew his bow to the full, and the arrow flew straight to the heart of the red. The surprised onlookers saw that this new competitor was Cao Hong, who now became also a claimant for the robe.

However, yet another archer came forth from the green-robed ranks, playing with his bow and crying, "What is there amazing in your shooting, you three? See how I can shoot."

This man was Zhang He. He put his horse to the gallop, then turned his back and, shooting backwards, also hit the center of the red.

Thus, four arrows were now stuck in the bull's eye, and all agreed that it was marvelous archery.

"I think the robe should be mine," said Zhang He.

Before he could finish speaking, a fifth competitor came out from the red robes and shouted, "You shot backwards; but that is commonplace enough. Look while I shoot better than you all."

The speaker was Xiahou Yuan. He galloped off to the very limit, and then, bending his body over backwards, he sent his arrow right in among the other four.

As the gongs and drums broke out, Xiahou Yuan put aside his bow and rode up, saying, "Is not that a better shot than any of its predecessors?"

Then came out another from the greens who cried, "Leave the robe there for me, Xu Huang, to win!"

"What can you do that is better than my shot?" said Xiahou Yuan.

"That you hit the bull's eye is no great feat. You will see me win the silken robe after all."

So speaking, Xu Huang fitted an arrow to his bow. Then looking around, he aimed at the willow twig from which the robe hung down and shot thereat so true that his arrow cut it through, and the robe fluttered to the ground. At once Xu Huang dashed along, picked up the robe, and slipped it on. Then, riding swiftly to the terrace, he thanked the Prime Minister. No one present could withhold unstinted praise, and Xu Huang was turning to ride away.

But another green-clad general leaped out, saying, "Where would you go with that robe? Quickly leave it for me!"

All eyes turned to this man, who was Xu Chu.

Xu Huang cried, "The robe has already been adjudged to me. Would you dare take it by force?"

Xu Chu made no reply but galloped up to snatch the robe. As Xu Chu's horse drew near, Xu Huang struck at his rival a blow with his bow. But Xu Chu seized the bow with one hand while with the other he simply lifted his opponent out of his seat. Wherefore Xu Huang let go the bow and, the next moment, lay sprawling on the ground. Xu Chu slipped out of the saddle, too, and they began to pommel each other with their fists. Cao Cao sent one to separate them. But in the struggle, the robe had been torn and soiled. Cao Cao called the angry rivals before him; they came, one darting fierce looks of hate, the other grinding his teeth with rage.

"Never mind the robe. I see only your magnificent courage," said Cao Cao, smiling. "What does a robe more or less matter?"

Whereupon, Cao Cao called the generals to him one by one, and to each he presented a robe of Xichuan silk. They thanked him for the generous gifts, and he then commanded them to take their seats in due order. Then to the strains of a band of music, wherein each performer vied with all the others, the naval and military officers took their places. Civil officers of repute and generals of renown drank one to another, and hearty felicitations were exchanged.

Cao Cao looked around to those about him, saying, "Since the military officers have competed in mounted archery for our enjoyment and displayed their boldness and their skill, you, Gentlemen Scholars, stuffed full of learning as you are, can surely mount the terrace and present some complimentary odes to make the occasion a perfect success."

"We are most willing to obey your commands," they replied, all bowing low.

At that time, there was a band of four scholars named Wang Lang, Zhong Yao, Wang Can, and Chen Lin, and each of them presented a poem. Every poem sang the praises of Cao Cao's valuable services and great merits and said he was worthy to receive the highest trust of all.

When Cao Cao had read them, he laughed, saying, "You gentlemen are really too flattering. As a fact, I am but an ignoramus who began life with a simple bachelor's degree and recommendations for filial devotion. And when the troubles began, I built for myself a little cottage in the country near Qiao, where I could study in spring and summer and spend the rest of the year in hunting till the empire was once more tranquil and I could emerge and take office.

"To my surprise, I was chosen for a small military office, which changed my intentions, and I determined to repress the rebellion and so make a name for myself. I thought that I might win an inscription on my tomb to the effect that it covered the remains of the 'Lord Cao Cao Who Restores Order in the West.' That would have been ample for a life's work. I recall now how I destroyed Dong Zhuo and smote the Yellow Scarves; then, I made away with Yuan Shu and broke the power of Lu Bu; next, I exterminated Yuan Shao; and at the death of Liu Biao, I had subdued the whole empire.

"As a minister of state I have attained the topmost pinnacle of honor, and I have no more to hope for. Were it not for poor me, I know not how many there would be styling themselves emperors and dubbing themselves princes. Certain, there be those who, seeing my great authority, think I have some ulterior aim. But they are quite wrong. I ever bear in mind what Confucius said of King Wen of Zhou, that he was perfectly virtuous, and this saying is ever engraved on my mind. If I could, I would do away with my armies and retire to my fief with my simple title of Lord of Wuping.

Alas! I cannot. I am afraid to lay down my military powers lest I should come to harm. Should I be defeated, the state would totter, and so I may not risk real misfortune for the sake of an empty reputation for kindness. There be some of you who do not know my heart.”

As he closed, they all rose and bowed their heads, saying, “None are your equals, O Prime Minister, not even Duke of Zhou or the great Minister Yi Yin.”



A poem has been written referring to this:

Had Duke Zhou, the virtuous, died, while foul-
mouthed slander
was spreading vile rumors;
Or Wang Mang, the treacherous, while he was noted
for the
deference paid to learned men;
None would have known their real characters.



After this oration, Cao Cao drank many cups of wine in quick succession till he became very intoxicated. He bade his servants bring him brush and inkstone so that he might compose a poem.

But as he was beginning to write, they announced, “The Marquis of Wu has sent Hua Xin as an envoy and presented a memorial to appoint Liu Bei Imperial Protector of Jingzhou. Sun Quan’s sister is now Liu Bei’s wife,

while on the River Han, the greater part of the nine territories is under Liu Bei's rule."

Cao Cao was seized with quaking fear at the news and threw the pen on the floor.

Cheng Yu said to him, "O Prime Minister, you have been among fighting soldiers by myriads, and in danger from stones and arrows, many a time and never quailed. Now, the news that Liu Bei has got possession of a small tract of country throws you into a panic. Why is it thus?"

Cao Cao replied, "Liu Bei is a dragon among humans. All his life hitherto, he has never found his element, but now that he has obtained Jingzhou: it is as if the dragon, once captive, had escaped to the mighty deep. There is good reason for me to quake with fear."

"Do you know the reason of the coming of Hua Xin?" said Cheng Yu.

"No, I know not," said the Prime Minister.

"Liu Bei is Sun Quan's one terror, and Sun Quan would attack Liu Bei were it not for you, O Prime Minister. Sun Quan feels you would fall upon him while he was smiting his enemy. Wherefore, he has taken this means of calming Liu Bei's suspicions and fears and at the same time directing your enmity toward Liu Bei and from himself."

Cao Cao nodded. "Yes," he said.

Cheng Yu continued, "Now this is my plan to set Sun Quan and Liu Bei at one another and give you the opportunity to destroy both. It can be done easily."

"What is your plan?" asked Cao Cao.

"The one prop of the South Land is Zhou Yu. Remove it by petitioning that Zhou Yu be appointed Governor of Nanjun. Then get Cheng Pu made Governor of Jiangxia, and cause the Emperor to retain this Hua Xin in the

capital to await some important post. Zhou Yu will assuredly attack Liu Bei, and that will be our chance. Is not the scheme good?"

"Friend Cheng Yu, you are a man after my own heart."

Wherefore Cao Cao summoned the emissary from the South Land and overwhelmed him with gifts. That day was the last of the feastings and merry-makings, and Cao Cao, with all the company, returned to the capital, where he forthwith presented a memorial assigning Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu to the governorships of Nanjun and Jiangxia, and Hua Xin was retained at the capital with a post of ministry.

The messenger bearing the commissions for their new offices went down to the South Land, and both Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu accepted the appointments. Having taken over his command, the former thought all the more of the revenge he contemplated, and to bring matters to a head, he wrote to Sun Quan asking him to send Lu Su and renew the demand for the rendition of Jingzhou.

Wherefore Lu Su was summoned, and his master said to him, "You are the guarantor in the loan of Jingzhou to Liu Bei. He still delays to return it, and how long am I to wait?"

"The writing said plainly that the rendition would follow the occupation of Yizhou."

Sun Quan shouted back, "Yes, it said so! But so far they have not moved a soldier to the attack. I will not wait till old age has come to us all."

"I will go and inquire," said Lu Su.

So he went down into a ship and sailed to Jingzhou.

Meanwhile, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang were at Jingzhou, gathering in supplies from all sides, drilling their troops, and training their armies. From all quarters, people of learning flocked to their side. In the midst of this, they heard of Lu Su's coming, and Liu Bei asked Zhuge Liang what he thought.

Zhuce Liang replied, "Just lately, Sun Quan concerned himself with getting you appointed Imperial Protector of Jingzhou; that was calculated to inspire Cao Cao with fear. Cao Cao obtained for Zhou Yu the governorship of Nanjun; that was designed to stir up strife between our two houses and set us fighting so that he might accomplish his own ends. This visit of Lu Su means that Zhou Yu, having taken over his new governorship, wishes to force us out of this place."

"Then how shall we reply?"

"If Lu Su introduces the subject, you will at once set up loud lamentations. When the sound of lamentation is at its height, I will appear and talk over your visitor."

Thus they planned, and Lu Su was duly received with all honor.

When the salutations were over and host and guest were about to be seated, Lu Su said, "Sir, now that you are the husband of a daughter of Wu, you have become my lord, and I dare not sit in your presence."

Liu Bei laughed. "You are an old friend," said he. "Why this excessive humility?"

So Lu Su took his seat. And when tea had been served, the guest said, "I have come at the order of my master to discuss the subject of Jingzhou. You, O Imperial Uncle, have had the use of the place for a long time. Now that your two houses are allied by marriage, there should be the most

friendly relations between you two, and you should hand it back to my master.”

At this, Liu Bei covered his face and began to cry.

“What is the matter?” asked the guest.

Liu Bei only wept the more bitterly.

Then Zhuge Liang came in from behind a screen, saying, “I have been listening. Do you know why my lord weeps so bitterly?”

“Really I know not.”

“But it is easy to see. When my lord got the temporary occupation of Jingzhou, he gave the promise to return it when he had got the West River Land. But reflect. Liu Zhang of Yizhou is my lord’s younger brother, and both of them are blood relations of the ruling family. If my lord were to move an army to capture another region, he fears the blame of the ignorant. And if he yields this place before he has another, where could he rest? Yet while he retains this place, it seems to shame you. The thing is hard on both sides, and that is why he weeps so bitterly.”

The close of Zhuge Liang’s speech seemed to move Liu Bei to greater grief, for he beat his breast and stamped his feet and wept yet more bitterly.

Lu Su attempted to console him, saying, “Be not so distressed, O Uncle. Let us hear what Zhuge Liang can propose.”

Zhuce Liang said, “I would beg you to return to your master and tell him all. Tell him of this great trouble and entreat him to let us stay here a little longer.”

“But suppose he refuses: what then?” said Lu Su.

“How can he refuse since he is related by marriage to my master?” said Zhuge Liang. “I shall expect to hear glad tidings through you.”

Lu Su was really the first of generous people. Seeing Liu Bei in such distress, he could do no other than consent and say he would do so. Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang both thanked him most cordially, and after a banquet, the emissary went down into his ship to return.

On the way, Lu Su called in to see Zhou Yu at Chaisang and told him.

But Zhou Yu stamped his foot with rage and said, "My friend, you have been fooled again. Long ago, when Liu Bei was dependent on Liu Biao, he always cherished the intention to supplant him. Think you that he really pities Liu Zhang? This sort of evasive policy will certainly cause you much trouble. However, I have a scheme which I think Zhuge Liang will not be able to get the better of. Only you will have to make another journey."

"I should be pleased to hear your fine scheme," said Lu Su.

"Do not go to see our master. Return to Jingzhou and say to Liu Bei that since his family and the Suns are related by marriage, they really form but one house, and since he has qualms about attacking the west, we will do it for him. Thus, the South Land will march an army under this pretext, but really go to Jingzhou, and we shall take him unprepared. The road to the west runs through his city, and we will call upon him for supplies. He will come out to thank the army, and we will assassinate him, whereby we shall avenge ourselves and at the same time remove a source of future evil."

This seemed an excellent plan to Lu Su, and he returned at once to Jingzhou. Before receiving him, Liu Bei talked over the matter with his adviser.

Said Zhuge Liang, "Lu Su has not seen the Marquis of Wu. He has called in at Chaisang, and he and Zhou Yu have decided upon some scheme, which he is to talk you into accepting. However, let him talk. You, my lord,

only watch me; when I nod my head, then you agree to whatever he may propose.”

Lu Su was then admitted and said, “The Marquis of Wu praises the noble virtue of the Imperial Uncle, and after consultation with his officers, he has determined to take the western country on the Imperial Uncle’s behalf, and that done, Jingzhou can be exchanged for it without further delay. However, when the army marches through, it will be expected of you to contribute some necessary supplies.”

Zhuge Liang here nodded his head rapidly, at the same time saying, “We could hardly have hoped for such kindness.”

And Liu Bei saluted with joined hands and said, “This is due to your friendly efforts on our behalf.”

“When the brave army arrives, we shall certainly come out to meet it and entertain the soldiers,” said Zhuge Liang.

Lu Su felt great satisfaction and was quite happy at his success. He took his leave and went homeward. But Liu Bei as yet did not understand.

“What is their intention?” said he.

His adviser smiled, saying, “Zhou Yu’s end is very near. The ruse he is now trying would not take in a child.”

“Why?”

“This is the ruse known as ‘Borrow a Road to Destroy the Host.’ Under the pretense of taking the west, they intend to capture this place, and when you go out to compliment the army, you will be seized and they will dash into the city, which they hope to find unprepared.”

“And what are we to do?”

“Have no anxiety, my lord. All we have to do is to prepare a hidden bow to get the fierce tiger, to spread the enticing bait to hook the great

leviathan. Wait till Zhou Yu comes. If he is not killed, he will be nine-tenths a corpse. We will call in Zhao Yun for orders and give him secret instructions, and I will dispose the others.”

And Liu Bei was glad.



Let Zhou Yu lay what plans he will,
Zhuge Liang anticipates his skill;
That land of rivers fair bait did look,
But he forgot the hidden hook.

Lu Su hastened back to Zhou Yu to tell him that all was going as he desired and Liu Bei would come out to welcome the army.

Zhou Yu laughed with glee, saying, “At last! Now they will fall into my trap.”

Zhou Yu bade Lu Su prepare a petition for the information of the Marquis, and he ordered Cheng Pu to bring up reinforcements. He himself had nearly recovered from the arrow wound and felt well. He made his dispositions for the advance, appointing Gan Ning Van Leader, Xu Sheng and Ding Feng the Commanders of the body, and Ling Tong and Lu Meng Rear Guards. The army numbered fifty thousand troops, and Zhou Yu marched with the second division.

While voyaging in his ship, he was always smiling to think how he was to have Zhuge Liang at last. At Xiakou, he inquired, “Is there anyone to welcome the brave army?”

They told him, "The Imperial Uncle has sent Mi Zhu to greet us."

And Mi Zhu was called.

"What of the preparations for the army?" asked Zhou Yu as soon as Mi Zhu came.

"My master has seen to that. All is prepared," said Mi Zhu.

"Where is the Imperial Uncle?" asked Zhou Yu.

"He is at the city of Jingzhou, waiting outside the walls to offer you the cup of greeting."

"This expedition is on your account," said Zhou Yu. "When one undertakes so long a march and such a task, the rewards for the army must be very substantial."

Having got this idea of what Zhou Yu expected, Mi Zhu returned to his own city, while the southern battle ships in close order sailed up the river and took their places along the bank. As they went on, the most perfect tranquility seemed to reign on all sides. Not a ship was visible anywhere, and no one hindered. Zhou Yu pressed forward till he came quite near Jingzhou, and still the wide river lay calm. But the spies who came back reported two white flags flying on the city walls.

Still not a person was seen, and Zhou Yu began to feel suspicious. He had his ship navigated into shore, and he himself landed on the bank, where he mounted a horse and, with a small army of three thousand veterans under Gan Ning, Xu Sheng, and Ding Feng, traveled along the land road.

By and by, he came to the city wall. There was no sign of life. Reining in his steed, he bade them challenge the gate.

Then, someone from the wall asked, "Who is there?"

The soldiers of the South Land replied, "The Commander-in-Chief of the South Land, Zhou Yu, in person."

Immediately was heard the thud of a club, and the wall became alive with troops, all armed. And from the tower came out Zhao Yun, who said, "Why are you here, General?"

"I am going to take the west for you," replied Zhou Yu. "Do you not know?"

"The Directing Instructor knows that you want to try the ruse of 'Borrow a Road to Destroy the Host.' And so he stationed me here. And my master bade me say that he and the ruler of the West River Land are both members of the reigning family so that he could not think of such baseness as attacking Yizhou. If you people of the South Land do so, he will be forced to go away into the mountains and become a recluse. He could not bear to lose the confidence of humankind."

At this, Zhou Yu turned his horse as if to return. Just then, his scouts came up to report: "Armed bands are moving toward us from all four sides, led by Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Huang Zhong, and Wei Yan. Their number is unknown, but the sound of their tramping shakes the heavens. They say they want to capture the Commander-in-Chief."

At these tidings, Zhou Yu's excitement became so intense that he fell to the ground with a great cry, and the old wound reopened.

The game was now too deep; in vain he sought
A counter-move; his efforts came to nought.

Later chapters will show what was Zhou Yu's fate.



END OF ACT XIII

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XIV:

THE SONS OF FATHERS MURDERED:

THE BATTLE OF TONG PASS

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XIV

CHAPTER 57

SLEEPING DRAGON MOURNS IN CHAISANG; YOUNG PHOENIX
INTERVENES AT LEIYANG.

In the last chapter, it was said that a sudden rage filled the bosom of Zhou Yu, and he fell to the ground. Then he was carried to his boat. It only added to his rage and mortification to be told that Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang could be seen on the top of one of the hills, apparently feasting and enjoying some music. He lay grinding his teeth with vexation.

“They say I shall never be able to get Yizhou! But I will—I swear I will.”

Soon after, Sun Quan’s brother Sun Hu arrived, and Zhou Yu told him his vexations.

“My brother sent me to assist you,” said Sun Hu.

Zhou Yu ordered Sun Hu to press the army forward for Yizhou, and they got to Baqiu. There they stopped, for the scouts reported large forces under Liu Bei’s generals—Liu Feng and Guan Ping—barring the water route in the Great River. This failure did not make the Commander-in-Chief any calmer.

About this time, a letter from Zhuge Liang arrived, which ran like this:

“Since our parting at Chaisang, I have thought of you often. Now comes to me a report that you desire to take the West River Land, which I regret to say I consider impossible. The people there are strong, and the country is precipitous and defensible. Imperial

Protector Liu Zhang may be weak within, but he is strong enough to defend himself.

“Now indeed, General, you would go far and you would render great services, yet can anyone foretell the final result? No! Not even Wu Qi the Great General could say for certain, nor could Sun Zi the Famed Strategist be sure of a successful issue. Cao Cao suffered severe defeat at the Red Cliffs. Think you he will ever cease to hope for revenge? Now, if you undertake a long expedition, will he not seize the occasion to fall upon the South Land and grind it to powder? Such a deed would be more than I could bear, and I venture to warn you of the possible danger if haply you may condescend to regard it.”

The letter made Zhou Yu feel very sorrowful, and he sighed deeply. He called for paper and ink and wrote to the Marquis of Wu.

Having done this, he said to his assembled officers, “I have honestly tried to do my best for our house, but my end is at hand. The number of my days is accomplished. You must continue to aid our master till his end shall be achieved—”

He stopped, for he had swooned.

Slowly, he regained consciousness, and as he looked up to Heaven, he sighed heavily, “O Heaven, since you made Zhou Yu, why did you also create Zhuge Liang?”

Soon after, he passed away. He was only thirty-six.



The battle at the Red Cliffs made him famous;

Though young in years he gained a veteran's
reputation.

Deep feeling, his music declared its intensity;
Subtle, with excess hospitality he foiled a plot;
Persuasive, he obtained a large gift of grain from Lu
Su;

Capable, he led an army of millions.

Baqui was his deathbed, there his fate met him.

Sadly indeed they mourned him.



After his death, his generals sent his dying memorial to the Marquis of Wu, who was most deeply affected and wept aloud at the sad tidings of his death. When Sun Quan opened the letters, he saw that Lu Su was named as the dead general's successor. This is the letter:

“Possessing but ordinary abilities, there was no reason why I should have been the recipient of your confidence and high office, but I have not spared myself in the leadership of the great army under my command that thereby I might prove my gratitude. Yet none can measure life, and the number of our days is ordained by fate. Before I could achieve even my poor intentions, my feeble body has failed me. I regret it without measure. I die with Cao Cao threatening and our northern borders disturbed, and with Liu Bei in your family as though you were feeding a fierce tiger. None can foretell the fate of the empire in these nervous days of stress and of peculiar anxiety for you.

“Lu Su is most loyal, careful in all matters and a fitting man to succeed to my office. When a person is near death, his words are wise. If I may haply retain your regard, I may die but I shall not decay.”

“Zhou Yu should have been a king’s counselor!” cried Sun Quan, amid his tears. “He has left me, alas, too soon, and whom have I to lean upon? But he recommends Lu Su, and I can do nothing better than take that advice.”

Whereupon Sun Quan appointed Lu Su to the vacant command, Commander-in-Chief. Sun Quan also saw that the coffin of his beloved general was sent to Chaisang, ready for the funeral sacrifices.

The night of Zhou Yu’s death, Zhuge Liang was gazing up at the heavens when he saw a star of a general fall to the earth.

“Zhou Yu is dead,” said he with a smile.

At dawn, he sent to tell Liu Bei, who sent people to find out, and they came back to say it was true that Zhou Yu had died.

“Now that this has come to pass, what should we do?” said Liu Bei.

“Lu Su will succeed,” said Zhuge Liang. “And I see in the heavens signs of an assembly of generals in the southeast, so I shall go there. The mourning for Zhou Yu will serve as a pretext. I may find some able leaders there to be of help to you.”

“I am afraid lest the generals of the South Land harm you,” said Liu Bei.

“While Zhou Yu lived, I did not fear. Is there anything to dread now that he is gone?”

However, Zhuge Liang took Zhao Yun as commander of his escort when he embarked for Baqiu, and on the road he heard of Lu Su's succession to the late general's post. As the coffin of Zhou Yu had been sent to Chaisang, Zhuge Liang continued his journey thither and, on landing, was kindly received by Lu Su. The officers of the South Land did not conceal their enmity, but the sight of the redoubtable Zhao Yun, always close at hand, kept them from trying to hurt Zhuge Liang.

The officers brought by Zhuge Liang were arranged in order before the bier, and he himself poured the libation. Then he knelt and read this threnody:

“Alas, Zhou Yu! Hapless are you in your early death. Length of days is in the all-seeing eyes of Heaven, yet do humans suffer, and my heart is deeply grieved for you. I pour this libation that your spirit may enjoy its fragrance.

“I lament you. I lament your younger days passed in the companionship of Sun Ce, when, preferring eternal principles to material wealth, you abode in a humble cottage.

“I lament your ripe strength when you guarded distant Baqiu, putting fear into the heart of Liu Biao, destroying rebels, and ensuring safety.

“I lament the grace of your manhood. Married to a fair maid of the Qiao family, son-in-law of a great minister, you were such as would add luster to the Han Court.

“I lament your resolute purpose when you opposed the pledge-giving to Cao Cao. As in the beginning, your wings drooped not, so in

the end, your pinions spread wide.

“I lament your abandon, when your false friend, Jiang Gan, came to you at Poyang Lake. There, you manifested your lofty ideals.

“I lament your magnificent talents, proved in civil administration as in military science. With fire attacking the fierce enemy at the Red Cliffs, you brought his strength to weakness.

“I recall you as you were but yesterday, bold and successful, and I weep your untimely death. Prostrate, I weep tears of sorrow. Loyal and upright in heart, noble and spiritual by nature, your life has been but three decades, but your fame will endure for ages.

“I mourn for your affection. My bowels writhe with sorrow, and my deep-seated sadness will never cease. The very heavens are darkened; the army is sad; your lord sheds tears; your friends weep floods.

“Scanty of ability am I, yet even of me you begged plans and sought schemes to aid the South Land to repulse Cao Cao, to restore the Hans and comfort the Lius. But with you as the firm cornerstone and your perfect dispositions, could the final result cause any anxiety?

“Alas, my friend! The quick and the dead are ever separate; they mingle never. If in the deep shades, spirits have understanding, you now read my inmost heart, yet hereafter, there will be none on earth to comprehend.

“Alas, the pain!

“Deign to accept this my sacrifice.”

The sacrifice finished, Zhuge Liang bowed to the ground and keened while his tears gushed forth in floods. He was deeply moved.

Those who stood on guard by the bier said one to another, “People lied when they said these two were enemies. Look at the sincerity shown in sacrifice.”

And Lu Su was particularly affected by the display of feeling and thought, *Plainly, Zhuge Liang loved Zhou Yu much, but Zhou Yu was not broadminded enough and would have done Zhuge Liang to death.*



Before Sleeping Dragon emerged from his Nanyang
retreat,
A brilliant man had descended upon this earth;
Since, O Azure Heaven, ye made Zhou Yu,
Why needed Yellow Earth produce a Zhuge Liang?

Lu Su gave a banquet for Zhuge Liang, after which the guest left.

Just as Zhuge Liang was embarking, his arm was clutched by a person in Daoist dress who said with a smile, “You exasperated literally to death the man whose body lies up there. To come here as a mourner is an open insult to the South Land. It is as good as to say they have no other left.”

Zhuce Liang turned to look, and he saw it was no other than Pang Tong, or the Young Phoenix. Then Zhuge Liang laughed in his turn, and

they two, hand-in-hand, went down into the ship, where they talked heart to heart for a long time.

Before leaving, Zhuge Liang gave his friend a letter and said, "I do not think that Sun Quan will use you as you merit. If you find life here distasteful, then you may come to Jingzhou and help to support my master. He is liberal and virtuous and will not disdain what you have spent your life in learning."

Then they parted, and Zhuge Liang went alone to Jingzhou.

Lu Su had the coffin of Zhou Yu taken to Wuhu, where Sun Quan received it with sacrifices and lamentations. The dead leader was buried in his native place.

Zhou Yu's family consisted of two sons and a daughter, the children being named Zhou Xun, Zhou Yin, and Zhou Ying. Sun Quan treated them with generosity and tenderness.

Lu Su was not satisfied that he was the fittest successor to his late chief and said, "Zhou Yu was not right in recommending me, for I have not the requisite ability and am unfitted for this post. But I can commend to you a certain able man, conversant with all knowledge, and a most capable strategist, not inferior to the old Guan Zhong or Yue Yi, one whose plans are as good as those of Sun Zi and Wu Qi, the most famous masters of the Art of War. Zhou Yu often took his advice, and Zhuge Liang believes in him. And he is at hand."

This was good news for Sun Quan, who asked the man's name, and when he heard it was Pang Tong, Young Phoenix, he replied, "Yes. I know him by reputation. Let him come."

Whereupon, Pang Tong was invited to the palace and introduced. The formal salutations over, Sun Quan was disappointed with the man's appearance, which was indeed extraordinary. Pang Tong had bushy eyebrows, a turned-up nose, and a stubby beard. So Sun Quan was prejudiced against Pang Tong.

"What have you studied," asked Sun Quan, "and what are you master of?"

Pang Tong replied, "One must not be narrow and obstinate; one must change with circumstances."

"How does your learning compare with that of Zhou Yu?" asked Sun Quan.

"My learning is not to be compared with his in the least. Mine is far greater."

Now Sun Quan had always loved his late general, and he could not bear to hear him disparaged. This speech of Pang Tong only increased his dislike.

So Sun Quan said, "You may retire, Sir. I will send for you when I can employ you."

Pang Tong uttered one long sigh and went away.

When he had gone, Lu Su said, "My lord, why not employ him?"

"What good would result? He is just one of those mad fellows."

"He did good service at the Red Cliffs fight, however, for it was he who got Cao Cao to chain his ships together."

"It was simply that Cao Cao wished to chain his ships together. No credit was due to this fellow. In any case, I give you my word that I will not employ him. That much is certain."

Lu Su went out and explained to Pang Tong that the failure was not due to lack of recommendation, but simply a whim of Sun Quan, and he must put up with it. The disappointed suitor hung his head and sighed many times without speaking.

“I fear you are doomed to constant disappointment here,” said Lu Su. “There is nothing you can hope for, eh?”

But still Pang Tong was silent.

“With your wonderful gifts, of course you will be successful whithersoever you may go. You may take my word for that. But to whom will you go?”

“I think I will join Cao Cao,” said Pang Tong suddenly.

“That would be hinging a gleaming pearl into darkness. Rather, go to Liu Bei, who would appreciate you and employ you fittingly.”

“The truth is that I have been thinking of this for a long time,” said Pang Tong. “I was only joking just now.”

“I will give you a letter to Liu Bei. And if you go to him, you must try to maintain peace between him and my lord and get them to act together against Cao Cao.”

“That has been the one desire of my life.”

Pang Tong took the letter offered by Lu Su and soon made his way to Jingzhou City. He arrived at a moment when Zhuge Liang was absent on an inspection journey, but the doorkeeper announced him and said he had come to throw in his lot with Liu Bei. He was received, for he was no stranger in name.

When Pang Tong was admitted, he made the ordinary salutation but did not make an obeisance and this, coupled with his ugly face, did not please his host.

“You have come a long and arduous journey,” said Liu Bei.

At this point, the suitor should have produced his letters from Zhuge Liang and Lu Su, but did not. Instead, he replied, “I hear, O Imperial Uncle, that you are welcoming the wise and receiving scholars, wherefore I have come to join your service.”

“The country is decently peaceful now, and unfortunately there is no office vacant. But away to the northeast, there is a small magistracy, Leiyang, which needs a chief. I can offer you that post until there should be something more fitting.”

Pang Tong thought this rather poor welcome for a person of his talent. But his friend was absent, so he could do nothing but control his annoyance and accept. He took his leave and started.

But when he arrived at his post, he paid no attention to business at all. He gave himself up entirely to dissipation. The taxes were not collected nor were lawsuits decided.

News of this reached Liu Bei, who was angry and said, “Here is this stiff-necked pedant throwing my administration into disorder.”

So Liu Bei sent Zhang Fei to the county with orders to make a general inspection of the whole county and look into any irregularities and disorders. But as Liu Bei thought there might be some tact needed, Sun Qian was also sent as coadjutor.

In due course, the inquisitors arrived at Leiyang, where they were received by the officials and welcomed by the people at the boundary. But the Magistrate did not appear.

“Where is the Magistrate?” asked Zhang Fei.

“Ever since his arrival, a hundred days ago and more, he has attended to no business, but spends his days from morn to night in wine-bobbing and

is always intoxicated. Just now he is sleeping off a debauch and is not yet risen."

This raised Zhang Fei's choler, and he would have dismissed the offender forthwith had not his colleague said, "Pang Tong is a man of great ability, and it would be wrong to deal with him thus summarily. Let us inquire into it. If he is really so guilty, we will punish his offense."

So they went to the magistracy, took their seats in the Hall of Justice, and summoned the Magistrate before them. He came with dress all disordered and still under the influence of wine.

"My Brother took you for a decent person," said Zhang Fei, angrily, "and sent you here as magistrate. How dare you throw the affairs of the county into disorder?"

"Do you think I have done as you say, General?" said Pang Tong. "What affairs have I disordered?"

"You have been here over a hundred days and spent the whole time in dissipation. Is not that disorderly?"

"Where would be the difficulty in dealing with the business of a trifling county like this? I pray you, General, sit down for a while till I have settled the cases."

Thereupon, Pang Tong bade the clerks bring in all the arrears, that he would settle them at once. So they brought in the piles of papers and ordered the suitors to appear. They came and knelt in the hall, while the magistrate, brush in hand, noted this and minuted that, all the while listening to the pleadings. Soon, all the difficulties and disputes were adjusted, and never a mistake was made, as the satisfied bows of the people proved. By midday, the whole of the cases were disposed of, and the arrears of the hundred days settled and decided.

This done, the Magistrate threw aside his pen and turned to the inquisitors, saying, "Where is the disorder? When I can take on Cao Cao and Sun Quan as easily as I can read this paper, what attention from me is needed for the business of this paltry place?"

Zhang Fei was astonished at the man's ability, rose from his seat, and crossed over, saying, "You are indeed a marvel, Master. I have not treated you respectfully enough, but now I shall commend you to my Brother with all my might."

Then Pang Tong drew forth Lu Su's letter and showed it to Zhang Fei.

"Why did you not show this to my Brother when you first saw him?" asked Zhang Fei.

"If I had had a chance, I would have done so. But is it likely that one would just take advantage of a letter of commendation to make a visit?"

Zhang Fei turned to his colleague and said, "You just saved a wise man for us."

Sun Qian and Zhang Fei left the magistracy and returned to Liu Bei, to whom they related what had happened.

Liu Bei then seemed to be conscious of his error and said, "I have been wrong. I have behaved unjustly to a learned person."

Zhang Fei then gave his Brother the letter in which Lu Su had recommended Pang Tong. Opening it, he read:

"Pang Tong is not the sort of person to be met with in any day's march. Employ him in some capacity where extra ordinary talent is required, and his powers will declare themselves. Beware of judging him by his looks, or you may lose the advantage of his abilities, and some other will gain him. This would be a misfortune."

While Liu Bei was feeling cast down at the mistake he had made, as shown by the letter, they announced the return of Zhuge Liang.

Soon Zhuge Liang entered the hall, and the first question he put after the formal salutations was: "Is Directing-Instructor Pang Tong quite well?"

"He is in charge of Leiyang," replied Liu Bei, "where he is given to wine and neglects his business."

Zhuce Liang laughed, saying, "My friend Pang Tong has extraordinary abilities and ten times my knowledge. I gave him a letter for you, my lord. Did he present it?"

"This very day I have received a letter, but from Lu Su. I have had no letter written by you."

"When a person of transcendent abilities is sent to a paltry post, he always turns to wine out of simple ennui," said Zhuge Liang.

"If it had not been for what my Brother said, I should have lost a great scholar," said Liu Bei.

Then he lost no time but sent Zhang Fei off to the northeast to request Pang Tong to come to Jingzhou City. When he arrived, Liu Bei went out to meet him and at the foot of the steps asked pardon for his mistake. Then Pang Tong produced the letter that Zhuge Liang had given him. What Liu Bei read therein was this:

"As soon as the Young Phoenix shall arrive, he should be given an important post."

Liu Bei rejoiced indeed as he read it, and he said, "Water Mirror said of the two men, Sleeping Dragon and Young Phoenix, that any man who obtained the help of either of them could restore the empire when he would. As I now have them both, surely the Hans will rise again."

Then he appointed Pang Tong as Vice Directing Instructor and General, and the two strategists began training the army for its work of subjugation.

News of these doings came to the capital, Xuchang, and Cao Cao was told of Liu Bei's two strategists and of the army in training and the stores accumulating and the league between his two chief enemies. And he knew that he had to expect an attack sooner or later. So he summoned his strategists to a council for a new campaign.

Said Xun Yu, "Sun Quan should be first attacked because of the recent death of their ablest general, Zhou Yu. Liu Bei will follow."

Cao Cao replied, "If I go on such a distant expedition, Ma Teng will fall upon the capital. While I was at the Red Cliffs, there were sinister rumors of this, and I must guard against it."

Xun Yu said, "The best thing that occurs to me is to obtain for Ma Teng the title of General Who Subdues the South and send him against the South Land. Thus he can be enticed to the capital and gotten rid of. Then you can have no fear of marching southward."

Cao Cao approved, and soon Ma Teng was summoned from Xiliang, a frontier territory in the west.

Ma Teng was a descendant of the famous leader Ma Yuan, General Who Quells the Waves. His father's name was Ma Sui. Ma Sui had held a minor magistracy in Tianshui in the reign of Emperor Huan but had lost it and

drifted west into the West Valley Land, where he got amongst the Qiang Peoples, one of whose women he took to wife. She bore him a son, Ma Teng.

Ma Teng was rather over the common height, and bold-looking. He was of a mild disposition and very popular. But in the reign of Emperor Ling, these Qiangs made trouble, and then Ma Teng raised a force and put it down. For his services he received the tile of General Who Corrects the West. He and Han Sui, who was known as Commander Who Guards the West, were pledged brothers.

On receipt of the summons to the capital, Ma Teng took his eldest son, Ma Chao, into his confidence and told him some of his former life.

“When Dong Cheng got the Girdle Edict from the Emperor, we formed a society, of which Liu Bei was one, pledged to put down rebellion. However, we accomplished nothing, for Dong Cheng was put to death and Liu Bei was unfortunate, while I escaped to the west. However, I hear that Liu Bei now holds Jingzhou, and I am inclined to carry out the plan we made so long ago. But here I am, summoned by Cao Cao, and what is to be done?”

Ma Chao replied, “Cao Cao has the command of the Emperor to call you. If you do not go, that will mean disobeying an imperial command and you will be punished. Obey the summons in so far as to go to the capital, where you may be able to arrange to carry out your original intention.”

But Ma Teng’s nephew, Ma Dai, held other opinions and opposed this. Said he, “Cao Cao’s designs are unfathomable. If you go, Uncle, I fear you will suffer.”

“Let me lead the army against the capital,” said Ma Chao. “Can we not purge the empire of evil?”

But his father said, "You must take command of the Qiang troops for the defense of our territory here. I will take with me your two brothers and your cousin. When Cao Cao knows that you have the Qiangs at your call and that Han Sui is prepared to assist, he will hardly dare to work any harm to me."

"Father, if you must go, be careful not to enter the city till you know exactly what plots and machinations are afoot."

"I will certainly take great care, so do not be too anxious," said the father.

The order of march was prepared. The Governor took five thousand troops, with his two sons—Ma Xiu and Ma Tie—as Leaders of the Van and his nephew Ma Dai bringing up the rear. These set out along the tortuous road to the capital. At seven miles distance from Xuchang, they camped.

When Cao Cao heard of Ma Teng's arrival, he called to him Minister Huang Kui and said to him, "Ma Teng is to be sent against the south, and I shall send you as Adviser. You are first to go to his camp and express my congratulations on his arrival and say that, as Xiliang is so distant and transport very difficult, he is not to take too large an army of his own. I will send a large force. Also tell him to come in soon for audience of the Emperor. I will send him supplies."

With these instructions, Huang Kui went to Ma Teng, who brought out wine and entertained him well.

In his cups, the messenger grew confidential and said, "My father perished at the hands of Li Jue and Guo Si, and I have always nourished resentment. Now there is another rebel in power, wronging our Prince."

"Who is that?" asked Ma Teng.

“The wrongdoer is that rebel Cao Cao, of course. Do you mean to say you do not know?”

However, Ma Teng was careful. He thought it very likely that these words were but a trap for him, so he pretended to be greatly shocked and begged his guest to be careful lest he be overheard.

But Huang Kui cared not, shouting, “Then you have quite forgotten the Girdle Edict, eh?”

Ma Teng began to see Huang Kui was sincere and presently became confidential in turn and told his guest all his schemes.

“Cao Cao wants you to go in to audience. There is no good intention there. Do not go,” said Huang Kui. “You lead your army up close to the city and get Cao Cao to come and review them. When he comes, assassinate him.”

They two settled how this plan could be worked out, and the messenger, still hot with anger and excitement, returned to his home.

Seeing Huang Kui so disturbed in mind, his wife, Lady Zhi, asked him what was wrong. But he would tell her nothing. However, he had a concubine, Li Chunxiang. And it happened that she had an intrigue with the wife’s younger brother, Miao Ze, who much desired to marry her. The concubine, who also saw her lord’s displeasure, spoke of it to her paramour, and he told her she could probably draw from him what was wrong by a leading question.

“Ask him what is the truth about two men, Liu Bei and Cao Cao: who is the wicked one,” suggested Miao Ze.

That evening, Huang Kui went to the apartments of his concubine, and she presently put the question proposed by her lover.

Her lord, still rather intoxicated, said, "You are not an official; still you know right from wrong as well as I. My enemy, and the man I would slay if I could, is Cao Cao."

"But why? And if you wish to slay him, why do you not do something?" said she.

"I have done something. I have settled with General Ma Teng to assassinate Cao Cao at the review."

Li Chunxiang, of course, told her paramour, who told Cao Cao, and Cao Cao made his arrangements to defeat the scheme. He called up his trusty generals and gave them orders for the morrow, and, this done, he arrested Huang Kui and all his household.

Next day, as arranged, Ma Teng and his western troops came close up to the wall, and among the flags and banners, he discerned that of the Prime Minister himself, whereby he knew that Cao Cao would hold the review in person.

So Ma Teng rode forward. Suddenly, a bomb exploded, and at this signal there appeared bodies of armed troops in four directions: right and left, front and rear, led by Xu Chu, Xiahou Yuan, Cao Hong, and Xu Huang. The western forces were quite hemmed in.

Ma Teng then saw the mistake he had made, and he and his two sons fought valiantly to free themselves from the trap. The youngest son, Ma Tie, soon fell in the volleys of arrows. Father and son rode this way and that, seeking a way out, but failed on every side. Both were sorely wounded, and when their steeds fell from their many arrow wounds, both were captured.

Ma Teng, Ma Xiu, and the miserable Huang Kui, who could not keep his counsel, were brought before Cao Cao. Huang Kui loudly protested his

innocence. Cao Cao then called in the witness Miao Ze.

“That worthless scoundrel has spoiled all my plans!” cried Ma Teng against Huang Kui. “Now I cannot slay the rebel and purge my country. But it is the will of Heaven!”

Father and son were dragged forth, the father uttering volleys of abuse all the time. And so three men were executed in this venture.



The sons and father share one niche of fame,
For purest loyalty their praise the same.
To their own hurt the rebels they withstood,
Content to die to make their pledges good.
In blood the solemn oath they did indite
To slay the wicked and preserve the right.
A worthy father's worthy sons by western bride,
Old Wave-Queller's name his grandson glorified.



“I desire no other reward than Li Chunxiang as wife,” said the betrayer, Miao Ze.

Cao Cao smiled and said, “For her sake, then, you have brought a whole household to death. What advantage would there be in preserving such a miscreant?”

So Cao Cao bade the executioners put both the traitor and the woman to death, with Huang Kui's household. Those who saw the fearful vengeance sighed at its cruelty.



Through passion base a loyal man was slain,
And she who shared his passion shared his fate;
The man they served was pitiless in hate,
And thus a mean man's treachery was vain.



Cao Cao did not desire to rouse the rancor of the army of Xiliang, wherefore he proclaimed to them, "The intended treachery of your leaders was theirs alone."

However, he sent to secure the passes so that Ma Dai would not escape.



As has been said, Ma Dai led the rearguard. Before long, the fugitives from the main army came and told him what had occurred at the capital. This frightened him so much that he abandoned his army and escaped, disguised as a trader.



Having slain Ma Teng, Cao Cao decided to set out on his expedition to the south. But then came the disquieting news of the military preparations of Liu Bei, whose objective was said to be the west.

This caused Cao Cao alarm, for he said, "The bird's wings will be fully grown if he obtains possession of the West River Land."

As Cao Cao recognized the difficulty, from among his counselors there arose one who said, “I know how to prevent Liu Bei and Sun Quan from helping each other, and both the south and the west will be yours.”

Chill death struck down the heroes of the west,
Calamity approached the bold leaders of the south.

The next chapter will unfold the scheme.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XIV

CHAPTER 58

MA CHAO LAUNCHES AN EXPEDITION FOR REVENGE; CAO CAO FLEES
THE FIELD IN DISGUISE.

“What is this good plan of yours, friend Chen Qun?” asked Cao Cao of the speaker, who was a civilian in his service.

Chen Qun replied, “Your two principal enemies—Liu Bei and Sun Quan—are now firm allies, close as lips and teeth. But Liu Bei wants the West River Land, and if you, O Prime Minister, send a mighty host against Sun Quan, Sun Quan must ask help from his friend Liu Bei, who, having his heart set on the west, will refuse it. Sun Quan, without this aid, cannot stand and will become so weak that the South Land will be yours for the taking, and Jingzhou will follow in a tap of the drum. The west will follow, and the whole empire is yours.”

“Those are my thoughts put into words,” replied Cao Cao.

The expeditionary force of three hundred thousand troops set out for the south. Zhang Liao of Hefei was in command of the supply department.

Sun Quan speedily heard of the move and called in his advisers.

At the council, Zhang Zhao said, “Let us send to Lu Su to tell him to write at once to Liu Bei that he may help us. They are good friends, and Liu Bei will certainly respond favorably. Beside, since Liu Bei and our lord are

now connected by marriage, there is no risk of refusal. With the support of Liu Bei, there is no danger to our country.”

Sun Quan listened to this advice and sent to Lu Su, bidding him to ask help from Liu Bei. Accordingly, on receipt of this command, a letter was written to Liu Bei, who after reading it, retained the messenger at the guesthouse till Zhuge Liang could arrive from Nanjun. As soon as he arrived, Liu Bei showed him the letter.

The adviser said, “It is not necessary for the South Land’s troops to move, nor need we send ours. I can prevent Cao Cao from even daring to look in the southeast direction.”

So Zhuge Liang wrote a reply telling Lu Su:

“You can lay aside all anxiety and rest content, for if the northern army approach, they will be forced backward at once.”

The letter was given to the messenger, and then Liu Bei asked his adviser, “How could the Instructor hope to roll back the huge army of three hundred thousand troops that Cao Cao is preparing to bring south?”

Zhuce Liang replied, “Cao Cao’s chief fear is Xiliang. Now just lately, he has slain Ma Teng and his sons as well, and the people of Xiliang are grinding their teeth with rage. Now, you must write and ask Ma Chao to march through the pass, and Cao Cao will have no leisure to think of any expedition to the south.”

The letter was written, sent by a trusty hand, and duly delivered.

Now Ma Chao was in Xiliang. One night, he had a vision. In his dream, he saw himself laying out on a snowy plain, and many tigers were coming up

and biting him. He awoke in a fright and began to wonder what the dream portended. Failing to explain it, he told the dream to his officers. One of them ventured to say the portent was evil. This was General Pang De.

“What is your interpretation?” asked Ma Chao.

“Meeting with tigers on a snowy plain is a very inauspicious subject to dream about. Assuredly, our old General is in trouble at the capital.”

And at that moment, one entered in hot haste and cast himself on the earth, weeping and crying, “The uncle and his sons are dead!”

It was Ma Dai, the nephew of Ma Teng. And he told the story of the evil: “Uncle Ma Teng and Huang Kui had planned to assassinate Cao Cao, but the plot had miscarried and become known. Ma Tie fell in the battlefield, Uncle Ma Teng and Ma Xiu were put to death in the marketplace, and I escaped in disguise.”

Ma Chao fell to the ground and wept bitterly, grinding his teeth with rage at his enemy Cao Cao. They lifted him to his feet and led him away to repose.

Soon after, arrived a messenger with a letter from Liu Bei, which read like this:

“In these latter days of the hapless Hans, when the rebellious and tyrannical Cao Cao monopolizes all power, to the injury of the Emperor and the wretchedness of the people, I, Liu Bei, recall that your father and I were recipients of an edict and we swore to exterminate the recreant. Now your father has suffered death at the hands of the tyrant, and you must avenge him. As the holy books say, you cannot let the same sky cover you—nor the same sun shine upon you—and your father’s murderer. If you can lead your army to attack Cao Cao on one side, I will march my armies to prevent his retreat,

and he will be taken, and all his evil crew can be exterminated. Then and thus will your father be avenged, and the Hans can be restored. I might add more, but I will await your reply.”

Wiping his tears, Ma Chao wrote a reply which was returned by the bearer.

The Xiliang army was then mustered; horse and foot were assembled. Just before the day that had been fixed for the start, the Imperial Protector of Xizhou, Han Sui, sent for Ma Chao, to whom he showed a letter from Cao Cao promising the Lordship of Xiliang as a reward for sending Ma Chao a prisoner to the capital.

“Bind us both, Uncle, and send us thither! You need not move a single spear,” said the younger man, prostrating himself.

But Han Sui raised him, saying, “Your father and I were sworn-brothers. Think you I would harm you? Rather will I help if you are going to fight.”

Ma Chao expressed his gratitude. The unhappy bearer of Cao Cao’s letter was dragged forth and beheaded. This done, the two took count of their armies. Han Sui had eight divisions under eight commanders—Yang Qiu, Cheng Yin, Hou Xuan, Liang Xing, Cheng Yi, Li Kan, Ma Wan, and Zhang Han—all to be relied upon to follow Han Sui. Ma Chao had two leaders, Pang De and Ma Dai. The total force was two hundred thousand troops, with which the commanders marched to Changan.

The Governor of that city was Zhong Yao. As soon as he heard what was afoot, he sent a fleet messenger to Cao Cao and prepared for defense. He led his force out into the open plain and arrayed it for battle.

Ma Dai, with fifteen thousand, came on first, pouring over the countryside like a flood. Zhong Yao would parley with him, but Ma Dai

came forward, sword in hand, to attack. However, the defender did not take the challenge but turned and fled. Ma Dai followed in pursuit. Soon, the main body of the invaders arrived, and they surrounded the city, which Zhong Yao set about defending.

Changan had been the capital of the Western Han and so was well-fortified with a solid wall and a deep moat, safe against the most terrific attacks. The new armies besieged the city for ten days without success.

Then, Pang De proposed a plan. Said he, "Since the land about the city is barren and the water bitter, the people must have communication with the country around in order to live. Further, they have no fuel. Ten days of siege must have exhausted the supplies in the city, wherefore, if we relax for a time—well, you will see. We shall capture the city without moving a finger."

"Your plan seems excellent," said Ma Chao, when he heard what it was.

Thereupon, they sent orders to each division to retire, and Ma Chao covered the retreat. Next day, Zhong Yao went up on the walls to look around and saw that the besiegers had gone. However, suspecting a ruse, he sent out spies, who returned to say the soldiers had really moved away to a distance. Wherefore he felt much relieved and allowed both soldiers and people to go out into the country to cut the much-needed firewood and bring in water. The city gates, thrown wide open, were thronged with those passing in and out.

This continued for five days, and then they heard that Ma Chao's army was returning. A panic ensued. The people rushed into the city, and the gates were once more barred.

The commander of the west gate was Zhong Jing, brother of Zhong Yao. About the third watch of the night, a torch was seen moving just inside

the gate; when Zhong Jing went to see what was wrong, and was passing the gateway, a man suddenly galloped up and slashed at him with a sword.

At the same time, the attacker shouted, "Here is Pang De!"

Zhong Jing was taken aback, could not defend himself, and was cut down. The gate guard was soon disposed of, the gates were shattered, and the soldiers of Ma Chao and Han Sui came pouring in. Zhong Yao escaped by the opposite gate and left the city in the hands of his enemies. He reached Tong Pass, where he fortified himself and sent news of the misfortune to Cao Cao.

Cao Cao threw aside all plans for his expedition to the south when Changan was lost.

He at once gave orders, "Cao Hong and Xu Huang, you are to march your ten thousand troops to Tong Pass to support Zhong Yao. You are to hold the Pass at all costs for ten days, or you will pay for its loss with your heads. After ten days, the Pass will be no concern of yours, for I will be there with the main army."

Cao Ren said, "Cao Hong, short of temper, is unfitted to hold the Pass. Everything could happen."

Cao Cao replied, "You will go to reinforce him."

Cao Hong and Xu Huang made all haste to Tong Pass and took over the command from Zhong Yao. They confined themselves to defense, and though Ma Chao appeared every day and reviled and shouted shameful things of the three generations of Cao Cao's family, the guardians of the Pass remained quiet. But Cao Hong fretted at the daily insults and would have led the defenders out to fight had not his colleague restrained him.

“Ma Chao only wishes to provoke you to come out, but remember our orders and go not. The Prime Minister has some master plan.”

So spoke Xu Huang. But the advice was hard to follow, for Ma Chao’s soldiers took turns in reviling the defenders of the Pass, resting neither day nor night. And Xu Huang found it hard to curb his colleague’s impatience.

Thus it continued till the ninth day. Then the defenders saw that their enemies had turned all their horses loose and were lolling about on the grass and sleeping as if quite fatigued.

Thereupon, Cao Hong bade them saddle his horse, told off three thousand troops, and soon, this small force was dashing down to catch the besiegers unprepared. The soldiers of Ma Chao at once fled, leaving their steeds and throwing aside their weapons. Cao Hong could not resist pursuit and chased them.

At this time, Xu Huang was higher up the road, taking in cartloads of grain and forage. But when he heard what his impulsive colleague had done, he hastily got a force together and went to his rescue. He shouted to Cao Hong to return.

Suddenly, a great shouting arose near Xu Huang, and out dashed Ma Dai to attack. Both Cao Hong and Xu Huang turned to flee, but the drums rolled and two bodies of troops led by Ma Chao and Pang De came out from behind the hills.

Then a battle began which went against Cao Cao’s troops from the first. They fell fast, but some of them cut an alley through the press and made for the Pass. Their enemies flooded into the Pass in close pursuit, and they had to abandon their post and flee whither they could find a way.

Pang De pursued after Cao Hong, but Cao Ren came to his rescue, and they both fled. Ma Chao and Pang De took the Pass.

Cao Hong made all haste to his master to give him the evil tidings.

“When I gave you the limit of ten days, why did you leave the Pass on the ninth?”

“Those soldiers from Xiliang hurled every sort of insult at us,” replied Cao Hong. “And when I thought I had them unprepared, I took the opportunity. But I fell victim to their cunning.”

“You are young and impetuous. But, Xu Huang, you ought to have known.”

Xu Huang said, “He would not listen, though I told him many times. And that day I was taking in stores in another part of the Pass. As soon as they told me, I felt sure there would be some misfortune, and so I hastened after him, but it was too late.”

Cao Cao was annoyed and ordered Cao Hong to be put to death. But his colleague officers begged that he might be pardoned, and as he had confessed his fault, he was allowed to go free and unpunished.

Cao Cao advanced to Tong Pass.

Cao Ren said, “We should establish a strong stockade before attacking.”

So trees were felled and a strong stockade built. They made three camps: Cao Ren was in the left; Xiahou Yuan, the right; and Cao Cao himself was in the center one.

Soon after, Cao Cao and all his officers in a body rushed to attack the Pass. They ran against the Xiliang troops posted on two sides, halted, and

formed their array. This done, Cao Cao rode to the center standard, whence he looked at his opponents.

He saw before him a body of fine troops, everyone with the bearing of a hero. And the leader, Ma Chao, was worthy of them, with his vivid face as if powdered and red lips as if colored, his supple hips and broad shoulders, his deep voice and fierce strength. He was wearing silver helmet and armor and gripping a long spear as he sat there on his charger. Pang De and Ma Dai supported him, and Cao Cao admired Ma Chao in his secret heart.

However, Cao Cao urged forward his steed and shouted to Ma Chao, "Why are you arrayed against the Hans, whom your father and grandfather served faithfully?"

Ma Chao ground his teeth and cursed Cao Cao, "Rebel! Betrayer of both prince and people! Murderer of my father and brothers! My hate for you is to the death: the same sky shall not continue to cover us, for I will take you captive and satiate my appetite on your living flesh."

With this he set his spear and rode over toward Cao Cao as if to slay him. But Yu Jin came out from behind and engaged Ma Chao in battle. These two fought some half score bouts, and then Yu Jin had to flee. Zhang He, however, took his place, and the two warriors exchanged twenty passes. Then Zhang He, too, ran away.

Next to come forth was Li Tong. Ma Chao's martial prowess was now at its height, and he made short work of Li Tong, who went out of the saddle at the first blow. Then, Ma Chao flourished his spear at the troops behind him as a signal for them to come on, which they did like a flood. They overwhelmed Cao Cao's forces, and Ma Chao, Pang De, and Ma Dai rode forward to try to capture Cao Cao.

They came close. Cao Cao heard one of his pursuers shout to another, "Cao Cao is he in the red dress!"

So he hastily tore off his red robe and threw it away. He also heard one say "Cao Cao is he with the long beard!"

At once, Cao Cao took the sword that he wore at his side and sawed off some of the beard. Yet again, a soldier recognized him and told Ma Chao that Cao Cao had now cut his beard, whereupon the order went forth to capture short beards. And then Cao Cao wrapped the corner of a flag about neck and jowl and fled.



Panic seized upon the soldiers at Tong Pass;
Frightened, Cao Cao flung off his brocade robe
And, terror-stricken, sawed his beard off with a sword.
The fame of Ma Chao rose even to the sky.



Cao Cao had gotten clear of the battle and was getting calmer. Then again, the sound of hoofs fell upon his ears. And on looking round, he perceived Ma Chao quite close. He and those near were panic-stricken, and all scattered for their lives, careless of the fate of their leader.

"Cao Cao, do not flee!" cried Ma Chao, coming nearer.

The whip dropped from Cao Cao's nerveless hand as he saw his enemy coming closer and closer. But just as Ma Chao had leveled his spear for a thrust, Cao Cao slipped behind a tree, changed the direction of his flight and so escaped, while Ma Chao struck the tree. He quickly pulled out his spear, but the delay gave the fugitive an advantage, though it did not quite free him from pursuit, for Ma Chao was soon again galloping on his track.

As they drew near the slope of some hills, a bold general suddenly appeared, who cried, "Do not hurt my lord!"

This was Cao Hong, and he went toward Ma Chao, whirling his sword. Ma Chao was stopped, and this saved Cao Cao's life. Cao Hong and Ma Chao fought half-a-hundred bouts till Cao Hong began to grow weary and become uncertain of his strokes. And when, shortly after, Xiahou Yuan appeared with some thirty horsemen, Ma Chao found it prudent to retire.

Then Cao Cao was escorted to his camp defended by Cao Ren. He found the camps were still unharmed and the losses had not been great.

As he sat in his tent, Cao Cao said, "Had I not spared Cao Hong, I should have fallen at the hands of Ma Chao today."

So he called in his rescuer and rewarded him well.

And they got together the scattered troops and strengthened the camp, deepening the moat and raising the rampart. Ma Chao came daily and challenged anyone to combat and abused them all shamefully, but, by the order of the Prime Minister, these insults were treated with silent contempt.

"Our enemies use long spears," said the officers. "We will meet them with bows and crossbows."

"They may have long spears," replied Cao Cao, "but whether I give battle or not depends on my decision. How can they thrust at us if we do not go out? All you have to do is to take no notice of them, and they will speedily retire."

The officers wondered. They said one to another, "The Prime Minister came out on this expedition of his own will and was foremost in the fight. Why does he accept defeat so easily?"

After some days, the spies reported, "Ma Chao has been reinforced by twenty thousand Qiangs, the tribespeople beyond the frontier."

Cao Cao took the news gleefully. His officers asked him why the news pleased him.

He replied, "Wait till I have defeated them, and I will explain."

Three days later, there was a report of further reinforcements, and Cao Cao not only smiled but gave a banquet. His officers ridiculed him in secret.

Then said Cao Cao, "You gentlemen laugh because I cannot destroy Ma Chao. Well then, can anyone of you propose a plan?"

Then rose Xu Huang and said, "O Prime Minister, you have a large force here, and the enemy also accumulate their strength on the Pass. This means that on the west side of Yellow River, behind their back, they are unprepared. If you can get an army secretly across the river and cross the Cattail Ferry, you will cut off their retreat. Then, if you can march down and smite them on the banks of River Wei, they can get no reinforcements and must fail."

"What you propose is just what I think," said Cao Cao.

So Xu Huang was placed over four thousand troops, and with Zhu Ling, marched to the west of Yellow River and hid in the gullies. They were to wait till Cao Cao crossed the Yellow River so that both could strike together.

Then, Cao Cao ordered Cao Hong to prepare boats and rafts. Cao Ren was left in command of the camps. Cao Cao himself marched to the east bank of Yellow River first and, from there, attempted to cross to the west bank.

When Ma Chao heard of the new military movements, he said, "I understand. The Pass is left, rafts are being prepared; that means that he is

going to cross to the west side and cut off my retreat. I must coast along the river and keep him off. If I can do that, his food will run short within twenty days on the east bank, and that will cause a mutiny. Then, I will travel south along the river and attack.”

Han Sui did not approve this plan. He quoted the military maxim to strike when troops were half over the river. “Attack from the south when his army is in the act of crossing, and his army will be drowned in the river,” said he.

“Uncle, your words are good,” replied Ma Chao. And the spies went forth to find out the time of crossing the river.

When Cao Cao’s preparations were complete and all was ready, he sent three parties of soldiers over the river first. They reached the ferry at the first sign of dawn, and the veterans were sent over first and lay out a camp. Cao Cao and his guard took up station on the east bank to watch the crossing.

Very soon, the sentinels reported, “A general dressed all in white is approaching.”

Everyone knew it must be Ma Chao. This terrified them, and they made a rush to get into the boats. The river bank became a scene of shouting men struggling who could first embark. Cao Cao sat watching and never stirred. He only issued orders to stop the confusion. Meanwhile, the yelling of the troops and the neighing of the horses of the approaching army came nearer and nearer.

Suddenly, a general jumped out of one of the boats and shouted to Cao Cao: “The rebels are close! Get into a boat, O Prime Minister!”

“The rebels are near. What matter?” replied Cao Cao simply to the speaker, who was Xu Chu. And he turned round to look at them.

As a fact, Ma Chao was very close, not a hundred paces away, and Xu Chu laid hold of Cao Cao and dragged him down the bank. The boat had already pushed off and was ten spans from the bank, but Xu Chu took Cao Cao on his back and leaped on board. The boat was small and in danger of being overturned, wherefore Xu Chu drew his sword and chopped away at the hands clinging to the side so that the soldiers fell back into the water.

The boat went downstream, Xu Chu standing in the prow, poling as hard as he could. His master crouched out of sight at his feet.

When Ma Chao saw the boat in midstream drifting down with the current, he took his bow and arrows and began to shoot. He also ordered his brave generals to go along the river and shoot so that a shower of arrows fell about the boat.

Xu Chu, fearing Cao Cao would be wounded, protected him with a saddle which he held over him with his left hand, for Ma Chao’s shooting was not in vain. Many of the soldiers working the boat were wounded. Some had fallen overboard, while more lay in the bottom of the boat. The boat itself got out of control and was whirled hither and thither by the current. Xu Chu straddled over the tiller and tried thus to guide the boat, while he poled with one hand and with the other held the protecting saddle over Cao Cao’s head.

Then the Magistrate of Weinan, Ding Fei, who from a hilltop saw that Cao Cao was very closely pressed—even in danger of his life—drove out from his camp all the cattle and horses there, so that they scattered over the hillside. This was too much for the born Qiang herdsmen of the plains. At sight of the beasts, they left the river and ran off to secure the cattle. Nor had they any inclination to pursue their enemy.

And so Cao Cao escaped. As soon as they reached the west bank of Yellow River (which was also the north bank of River Wei), the boat was scuttled. The rumor had spread that Cao Cao was on the river and in danger, so all his officers came to his aid. But he was now safe on shore. Xu Chu's double armor was stuck full of arrows. The officers escorted Cao Cao to the camp, where they made their obeisance and expressed the hope that he had not suffered seriously.

"The rebels very nearly caught me today," said he, smiling.

"They would have got across the river, had they not been enticed away by the freeing of the cattle and horses," said Xu Chu.

"Who was it that drew them off?" said Cao Cao.

Someone who knew told him. Before long, Magistrate Ding Fei came in to pay his respects, and Cao Cao thanked him.

"I should have been a prisoner but for your happy thought," said Cao Cao. And the magistrate received a rank of Commander in the army.

"They have gone, yet they will assuredly return tomorrow," said Ding Fei. "You must prepare to repel them."

"My preparations are all made," was the reply.

Cao Cao ordered his generals to spread themselves along the riverbank and throw up mounds as shelters for camps. If they saw the enemy approaching, the soldiers were to be withdrawn from behind the mounds, leaving the ensigns all flying so as to give the impression that each camp contained a garrison. Along the river, they were to dig ditches and put up sheds, thus enticing the enemy there, who would stumble into the pits and fall easy victims.

Ma Chao returned to Han Sui and told him, saying, "I would have captured Cao Cao, but a certain bold general had taken him on his back and leaped with him into a boat."

Han Sui replied, "I have heard that Cao Cao had a guard of the bravest and strongest soldiers under the command of Dian Wei and Xu Chu. They are called the Tiger Guard. Now as Dian Wei is dead, the man you saw must have been Xu Chu. He is both brave and powerful and goes by the name of Tiger Lust. You will do well to avoid him."

"I know his name, too," said Ma Chao.

"Cao Cao now means to attack our rear," continued Han Sui. "Let us attack first, before he can establish camps and stockades. If he can do that, it will be difficult to dislodge him."

"My idea is that we should hold the north bank of River Wei, and prevent him from crossing south."

"Worthy nephew, keep guard here while I go along the bank of the river and fight Cao Cao."

"If you will take Pang De as your Van Leader, I am content," said Ma Chao.

So Han Sui and Pang De, with fifty thousand troops, went away down to the River Wei, while Cao Cao again warned his generals to entice the enemy. Pang De was in advance with a goodly squadron of iron-clad horsemen, and they burst along at full speed.

Then there arose a confused shouting as they all went plunging into the ditches prepared for them. Pang De soon leaped out, gained the level ground, and laid about him with all his might. He slew many of Cao Cao's soldiers and presently got out of the thick of the fight.

But Han Sui had also been involved, and Pang De went afoot to try to aid him. On the way he met Cao Yong, a general of Cao Ren. Pang De cut Cao Yong down. Then, mounting the dead man's steed, he rode forward fiercely, slaying as he passed. He reached his leader, whom he led away southeast. The troops of Cao Cao pursued him, but Ma Chao came with reinforcements and drove them off. Ma Chao rescued a great number, and they continued fighting till evening, when they withdrew and mustered their troops. Two commanders, Cheng Yin and Zhang Han, were missing, and a couple of hundred soldiers had been killed when they fell into the pits.

Ma Chao and Han Sui discussed what should next be done.

"If we give the enemy time, he will make himself strong on the north bank. I think we can do no better than to raid his camp tonight," said Ma Chao.

"We must have a force and supports for it," said Han Sui.

So it was decided that Ma Chao should lead the striking force with Pang De and Ma Dai as supports. They would start at nightfall.

Now Cao Cao's troops were on the north bank of River Wei, and he gave his generals orders, saying, "The rebels will try to surprise us, as they are deceived by my not having set up stockades. You will place your soldiers in ambush. At the bomb signal, you will rush out from four directions to capture them."

At nightfall, Ma Chao sent out a small scouting party headed by Cheng Yi. Seeing nothing, Cheng Yi penetrated deep into the enemy's lines. Presently, a bomb was detonated. Out leapt the hidden troops, and in a few moments the whole scouting party were killed. Cheng Yi was cut down by the blade of Xiahou Yuan.

But close at hand came the main army led by Ma Chao, Ma Dai, and Pang De that rushed into the ambush forces.

Wait for the foe all undismayed.

Place your men in ambushade.

Generals striving to outvie

Are not beaten easily.

Who got the advantage will presently be told.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XIV

CHAPTER 59

XU CHU STRIPS FOR A FIGHT WITH MA CHAO; CAO CAO WRITES A LETTER TO HAN SUI.

The fight narrated in the last chapter lasted till morn when each side drew off, Ma Chao camping on the River Wei, whence he kept up harassing attacks both day and night. Cao Cao, also camped in the bed of the same river and began to construct three floating bridges out of his rafts and boats so as to facilitate communication with the south bank. Cao Ren established a stockade near the camp, which he barricaded with his carts and wagons.

Ma Chao determined to destroy this stockade, so his troops collected straw, and each man marched with a bundle and took fire with him. Han Sui's forces were to fight.

While one party attacked, the other party piled up the straw, which they lit, and soon there was a fierce fire all around. The defenders could do nothing against it, so they abandoned the stockade and ran away. All of the transport and bridges were destroyed. It was a great victory for the Xiliang army and gave them the command of the River Wei.

Cao Cao was sad at the failure to make good his strong camp and fearful of his defenselessness. Then, Xun You proposed a mud wall. So three thousand soldiers were set to build a mud rampart.

The enemy, seeing this, harassed the workmen with perpetual attacks at different points so that the work went slowly. Beside, the soil was very sandy, and the wall would not stand but collapsed as quickly as it was built.

Cao Cao felt helpless.

It was the ninth month of the sixteenth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 211), and the fierce cold of winter was just coming on. Ominous clouds covered the sky day after day with never a break.

One day, as Cao Cao sat in his tent very disheartened, a stranger was announced and was led in. He was an old man who said he had a suggestion to offer. He was tall, as delicate as a crane and as refined as a pine tree. He gave his name as Lou Zibo and said he came from Jingzhao. He was a recluse and a Daoist, his religious name being Plum-Blossom Dreamer.

Cao Cao received him with great courtesy, and presently the venerable one began, saying, "O Prime Minister, you have long been striving to make a camp on the river. Now is your opportunity. Why not begin?"

"The soil is too sandy to stand," said Cao Cao. "But if you have some other plan to propose, pray tell me what it is, O Hermit."

"You are more than human, O Prime Minister, in the art of war, and you surely know the times and seasons. It has been overcast for many days, and these clouds foretell a north wind and intense cold. When the wind begins to blow, you should hurry your army to carry up the earth and sprinkle it with water. By dawn, your wall will be complete."

Cao Cao seized upon the suggestion. He offered his aged visitor a reward, but the venerable one would receive nothing.

That night, the wind came down in full force. Every man possible was set to earth-carrying and -wetting. As they had no other means of carrying water, they made stuff bags which they filled with water and let out the water over the earth. And so, as they piled the earth, they froze it solid with water, and by dawn the wall was finished and stood firm.

When his scouts told Ma Chao that the enemy had built a wall, he rode out and saw it. Ma Chao was greatly perplexed and began to suspect help from the gods.

However, very soon after, he got his whole army together and sounded an attack. Cao Cao himself rode out of the camp, with only the redoubtable Xu Chu in attendance, and advanced toward the enemy.

Flourishing his whip, he called out, "I, Cao Cao, am here alone, and I beg Ma Chao to come out to parley with me."

Thereupon, Ma Chao rode out, his spear set ready to thrust.

"You despised me because I had no wall to my camp, but lo! in one single night, Heaven has made me a wall. Do you not think it time to give in?"

Ma Chao was so enraged that he almost rushed at Cao Cao, but he was not too angry to notice the henchman behind him, glaring in angry fashion, who held a gleaming sword in his grip. Ma Chao thought this man could be no other than Xu Chu, so he determined to find out.

With a flourish of his whip, he said, "Where is the noble 'Marquis Tiger' that I hear you have in your camp?"

At this, Xu Chu lifted his sword and roared, "I am Xu Chu of Qiao!"

From Xu Chu's eyes shot gleams of supernatural light, and his attitude was so terror-striking that Ma Chao dared not move. He turned his steed and retired.

Cao Cao and his doughty follower returned to their camp. As the two passed between the armies, not a man there but felt a quiver of fear.

"They know our friend Xu Chu over there as 'Marquis Tiger,'" said Cao Cao when he returned. And thereafter, the soldiers all called Xu Chu by that name.

“I will capture that fellow Ma Chao tomorrow,” said Xu Chu.

“Ma Chao is very bold,” said his master. “Be careful!”

“I swear to fight him to the death,” said Xu Chu.

Then, Xu Chu sent a written challenge to his enemy saying that the Marquis Tiger challenged Ma Chao to a decisive duel on the morrow.

Ma Chao was very angry when he received the letter.

“Dare he insult me so?” cried he. Then he wrote his pledge to slay Tiger Lust on the morrow.

Next day, both armies moved out and arrayed in order of battle. Ma Chao gave Pang De and Ma Dai command of the two wings, while Han Sui took the center.

Ma Chao took up his station in front of the center and shouted, “Where is Tiger Lust?”

Cao Cao, who was on horseback by the standard, turned and said, “Ma Chao is no less bold than Lu Bu!”

As he spoke, Xu Chu rode forth, whirling his sword, and the duel began. They fought over a hundred bouts, and neither had the advantage. But then, their steeds being spent with galloping to and fro, each retired within his own lines and obtained a fresh mount. The contest was renewed, and a hundred more encounters took place, still without victory to either.

Suddenly, Xu Chu galloped back to his own side, stripped off his armor, showing his magnificent muscles and, naked as he was, leaped again into the saddle and rode out to continue the battle.

Again the champions engaged, while both armies stood aghast. Thirty bouts more, and Xu Chu, summoning up all his force, plunged toward Ma Chao with his sword held high to strike. But Ma Chao avoided the stroke and rode in with his spear pointing directly at his opponent's heart. Throwing down his sword, Xu Chu dashed aside the spear, which passed underneath his arm.

Then ensued a struggle for the spear, and Xu Chu, by a mighty effort, snapped the shaft so that each held one half. Then the duel was continued, each belaboring the other with the pieces of the broken spear.

At this point, Cao Cao began to fear for his champion and so ordered two of his generals, Xiahou Yuan and Cao Hong, to go out and take a hand. At this, Pang De and Ma Dai gave the signal to their armored horsemen to attack. They rode in, and a melee began in which Cao Cao's troops were worsted, and the great champion Xu Chu received two arrow wounds in the shoulder. So the troops of Cao Cao retreated to their stockade, Ma Chao following them to the river. Cao Cao's army lost more than half their number.

Cao Cao barred his gates and allowed none to go out.

Ma Chao went down to the river. When he saw Han Sui, he said, "I have seen some wicked fighters, but none to match that Xu Chu. He is aptly nicknamed 'Tiger Lust.'"

Thinking that by strategy he might get the better of Ma Chao, Cao Cao secretly sent two bodies of troops across the river to the south bank to take up position so that he might attack in front and rear.

One day, from his ramparts, Cao Cao saw Ma Chao and a few horsemen ride close up to the walls and then gallop to and fro like the wind.

After gazing at them for a long time, Cao Cao tore off his helmet and dashed it on the ground, saying, "If that Ma Chao is not killed, may I never know my place of burial!"

Xiahou Yuan heard his master, and his heart burned within him. He cried, "May I die here at once if I do not destroy that rebel!"

Without more ado, Xiahou Yuan flung open the gates and rode out with his company. Cao Cao tried to stop this mad rush, but it was no good. So, fearing Xiahou Yuan might come to grief, Cao Cao rode out after him.

At sight of the soldiers of Cao Cao, Ma Chao faced his troops about, extended them in line and, as the enemy approached, dashed forward to the attack. Then, noticing Cao Cao himself among them, Ma Chao left Xiahou Yuan and rode straight for Cao Cao. Panic seized Cao Cao, and he rode for his life, while his troops were thrown into confusion.

It was during the pursuit of this portion of the Cao Cao's army that Ma Chao was told of a force of the enemy on the south of River Wei. Realizing the danger, he abandoned the pursuit, called in his forces, and went to his own camp, there to consult with Han Sui.

"What now? Cao Cao has crossed to the south of the river, and we can be attacked in the rear," said Ma Chao.

Commander Li Kan said, "Then you had better come to an agreement, sacrifice some territory, and make peace. Then both can repose through the winter and await the changes and chances that may come with the spring warmth."

"He is wise," said Han Sui, "and I advise the same."

But Ma Chao hesitated. Others exhorted him to make peace, and at length he agreed. So Yang Qiu and Hou Xuan were sent as messengers of peace to the camp of Cao Cao.

“You may return. I will send my reply,” said Cao Cao when they had declared the purport of their mission. And they left.

Then Jia Xu said to Cao Cao, “What is your opinion, O Prime Minister?”

“What is yours?” asked Cao Cao.

“War allows deceit; therefore pretend to agree. Then we can try some means of sowing suspicions between Han Sui and Ma Chao so that we may thereby destroy both.”

Cao Cao clapped his hands for very joy, saying, “That is the best idea of all! Most suitable! You and I agree in our ideas. I was just thinking of that.”

So an answer was returned:

“Let me gradually withdraw my soldiers, and I will give back the land belonging to you west of the Yellow River.”

And at the same time, Cao Cao ordered the construction of a floating bridge to help in the withdrawal to the east side.

When the reply arrived, Ma Chao said to Han Sui, “Although he agrees to peace, he is evil and crafty. We must remain prepared against his machinations. Uncle, you and I will take turns in watching Cao Cao and Xu Huang on alternate days. So shall we be safe against his treachery.”

They agreed and began the regular alternate watch. Soon Cao Cao got to know what they were doing, and he turned to Jia Xu, saying, “I am succeeding.”

“Who keeps the lookout on the north bank tomorrow?” asked Cao Cao.

“Han Sui,” replied someone.

Next day, Cao Cao, at the head of a large party of his generals, rode out of the camp, and the officers presently spread out right and left, he himself remaining a solitary rider visible in the center. Han Sui did not know that Cao Cao had come out.

Presently, Cao Cao called out, “Do any of you soldiers want to see Cao Cao? Here I am, quite alone. I have not four eyes nor a couple of mouths, but I am very knowing.”

The soldiers turned pale with fright. Then Cao Cao called up a man and told him to go and see Han Sui and say, “Sir, the Prime Minister humbly asks you to come and confer with him.”

Thereupon, Han Sui went out, and seeing Cao Cao wore no armor, Han Sui also threw off his and rode out clad in a light robe. Each rode up to the other till their horse’s heads nearly touched, and there they stood talking.

Said Cao Cao, “Your father and I were granted filial degrees at the same time, and I used to treat him as an uncle. Moreover, you and I set out to serve the court at the same time, too, and yet we have not met for years. How old may you be now, General?”

“I am forty,” replied Han Sui.

“In those old days in the capital, we were both very young and never thought about middle age. If we could only restore tranquility to the state, that would be a matter of rejoicing.”

After that, they chatted long about old times, but neither said a word on military matters. They gossiped for a couple of hours before they took

leave of each other.

It was not long before someone told Ma Chao of this meeting, and he went over to his ally to ask about it.

“What was it Cao Cao came out to discuss today?” said Ma Chao.

“He just recalled the old days when we were together in the capital.”

“Did he say nothing about military matters?”

“Not a word; I could not talk about them alone.”

Ma Chao went out without a word, but he felt suspicious.

When Cao Cao returned to his camp, he said to Jia Xu, “Do you know why I talked with him thus publicly?”

“It may be an excellent idea,” said Jia Xu, “but it is simply not sufficient to estrange two people. I can improve on it, and we will make them quarrel and even kill each other.”

“What is your scheme?”

“Ma Chao is brave but not very astute. You write a letter with your own hand to Han Sui himself and put in it some rambling statements about some harm that is going to happen. Then blot it out and write something else. Afterwards, you will send it to Han Sui, taking care that Ma Chao shall know all about it. Ma Chao will demand to read the letter, and when he sees that the important part of the letter has been changed, he will think that Han Sui has made the changes lest his secrets should leak out. This will fit into the private talk you had with Han Sui the other day, and the suspicion will grow until it has brought about trouble. I can also secretly corrupt some of

Han Sui's subordinates, and get them to widen the breach. Then we can settle Ma Chao."

"The scheme looks excellent," said Cao Cao. And he wrote the letter as suggested, and then erased and changed it, after which he sealed it securely and sent it across to Han Sui.

Surely enough, someone told Ma Chao about the letter, which increased his doubts, and he came to Han Sui's quarters to ask to see it. Han Sui gave it to him, and the erasures and alterations struck Ma Chao at once.

"Why are all these alterations here?" asked he.

"It came like that. I do not know."

"Does anyone send a rough draft like this? It seems to me, Uncle, that you are afraid I shall know something or other too well, and so you have changed the wording."

"It must be that Cao Cao has sealed up the rough draft by mistake."

"I do not think so. He is a careful man and would not make such a mistake. You and I, Uncle, have been allies in trying to slay the rebel. Why are you turning against me now?"

"If you doubt my word, I will tell you what you can do. Tomorrow, in full view of the army, I will get Cao Cao to come out and talk. You can hide in behind the ranks ready to kill me if I am false."

"That being so, I shall know that you are true, Uncle."

This arrangement made, next day Han Sui with five generals in his train—Li Kan, Ma Wan, Yang Qiu, Hou Xuan, and Liang Xing—rode to the front, while Ma Chao concealed himself behind the great standard. Han Sui sent over to say that he wished to speak to the Prime Minister.

Thereupon at his command, Cao Hong, with a train of ten horsemen, rode out, advanced straight to Han Sui, leaned over to him, and said, loudly

enough to be heard plainly, “Last night, the Prime Minister quite understood. Let there be no mistake.”

Then, without another word on either side, Cao Hong rode away.

Ma Chao had heard. He gripped his spear and started galloping out to slay his companion-in-arms. But the five generals checked him and begged him to go back to camp.

When Han Sui saw him, he said, “Nephew, trust me, really I have no evil intentions.”

But Ma Chao, burning with rage, went away. Then Han Sui talked over the matter with his five generals.

“How can this be cleared up?”

“Ma Chao trusts too much to his strength,” said Yang Qiu. “He is always inclined to despise you, Sir. If we overcome Cao Cao, do you think he will give way to you? I think you should rather take care of your own interests and go over to the Prime Minister’s side, and you will surely get rank one day.”

“I was his father’s pledged brother and could not bear to desert him,” said Han Sui.

“It seems to me that, as things have come to this pass...you simply have to, now.”

“Who would act as go-between?” asked Han Sui.

“I will,” said Yang Qiu.

Then Han Sui wrote a private letter which he confided to Yang Qiu, who soon found his way over to the other camp. Cao Cao was only too pleased, and he promised that Han Sui should be made Lord of Xiliang and Yang Qiu its Governor; the other confederates would be rewarded in other ways.

Then a plot was planned; when the preparations for the act of treachery were complete, a bonfire was to be lighted in Han Sui's camp, and all would try to do away with Ma Chao.

Yang Qiu went back and related all this to his chief, and Han Sui felt elated at the success of his overtures. A lot of wood was collected in camp at the back of his tent ready for the signal blaze, and the five generals got ready for the foul deed. It was decided that Ma Chao should be persuaded into coming to a banquet, and there they would slay him.

All this was done, but not without some hesitation and delay, and some news of the plot reached Ma Chao. He found out the careful preparations that had been made and resolved to act first. Leaving Ma Dai and Pang De in reserve, he chose a few trusted leaders and, with stealthy steps, made his way into Han Sui's tent. There, he found Han Sui and his five confederates deep in conversation. He just caught a word or two that Yang Qiu said: "We must not delay, now is the time."

Ma Chao burst into raging, yelling, "You herd of rebels! Would you dare to plot against me?"

They were taken aback. Ma Chao sprang at Han Sui and slashed at his face. Han Sui put up his hand to ward off the blow, and his hand was cut off. The five drew their swords and set on Ma Chao and his men, who rushed outside. Soon, Ma Chao was hemmed in by the five, but he kept them at bay by wonderful swordsmanship. And as the swords flashed, the red blood flowed. Soon Ma Wan was down and Liang Xing disabled; then the other three fled.

Ma Chao ran back into the tent to finish Han Sui, but the servants had removed him. Then a torch was lit, and soon there was commotion all through the camp. Ma Chao mounted his horse, for Pang De and Ma Dai had now arrived, and the real fight began.

Cao Cao's troops poured in from all sides: Xu Chu and Xu Huang were in front and behind, Xiahou Yuan and Cao Hong to the left and right. Meanwhile, the Xiliang soldiers fought with each other.

Losing sight of his generals, Ma Chao and one hundred riders got to the head of the floating bridge over the River Wei just about dawn. There, he fell across Li Kan coming over the bridge with an army. Ma Chao set his spear and rode at him full tilt. Li Kan turned down his spear and fled.

From behind Ma Chao, Yu Jin came up in pursuit. But unable to get near enough to seize Ma Chao, Yu Jin sent an arrow flying after him. Ma Chao's ear caught the twang of the bowstring, and he dodged the arrow, which flew on and killed Li Kan. Ma Chao turned to attack his pursuer, who galloped away, and then he returned and took possession of the bridge.

Quickly, Cao Cao's troops gathered about him, and the fiercest among them, the Tiger Guard, shot arrows at Ma Chao, which he warded off with his spear shaft so that they fell harmlessly to the earth. Ma Chao and his troops rode to and fro, striking a blow wherever there was a chance, but the enemy were very thick about him, and he could not force his way out. In desperation, he cut an alley northwards and got through, but quite alone. Of his followers, everyone fell.

Still, he kept on dashing this way and that, till he was brought down by a crossbow bolt. He lay upon the ground, and his enemies were pressing in. But at the critical moment, an army came in from the northwest and rescued him. Pang De and Ma Dai had come up in the very nick of time.

Thus, Ma Chao was rescued, and they set him on one of the soldiers' horses, and he again took up the battle. Leaving a trail of blood in his rear, he got away northwest.

Hearing that his enemy had gotten away, Cao Cao gave the order to his generals, "Pursue him day and night, and rich rewards are for him dead or alive. For his head, the rewards are a thousand ounces of gold and the lordship of a fief of ten thousand families. If anyone captures Ma Chao, the reward is the rank of general."

Consequently, the pursuit was hot, as everyone was anxious to win renown and reward. Meanwhile, careless of all but flight, Ma Chao galloped on, and one by one, his followers dropped by the way. The footmen who were unable to keep up were captured till very few remained, and only some scores of riders were left. They traveled toward Lintao, a city in West Valley Land.

Cao Cao, in person, joined the pursuit and got to Anding, but there, Ma Chao was still far in advance, so he gave up and returned. Gradually, the generals did the same, all coming back to Changan. Poor Han Sui, with the loss of his left hand, was an invalid, but he was rewarded with the Lordship of Xiliang. Yang Qiu and Hou Xuan were given noble ranks and offices in Weikou.

Then orders were given to lead the whole army back to the capital. Yang Fu, a military adviser from Liangzhou, came to Changan to point out the danger of withdrawal.

"Ma Chao has the boldness of Lu Bu and the heart of a barbarian. Unless you destroy him this time, he will come again and he will be both bolder and stronger, and the whole west will be lost. Wherefore, you should not withdraw your army."

Cao Cao said, “I would be quite willing to finish the subjugation. But there is much to do in the capital, and the south is still to conquer. So I cannot remain. But you, Sir, might secure this region for me. Do you consent?”

Yang Fu did consent. And he brought to Cao Cao’s notice Wei Kang, who was made Imperial Protector of Liangzhou, with joint military powers.

Just before Yang Fu left, he said to Cao Cao, “A strong force ought to be left in Changan, as a reserve in case they be required.”

“That has been already dealt with,” replied Cao Cao.

Contentedly, enough Yang Fu took leave and went away.

Cao Cao’s generals asked him to explain his recent policy, saying, “Since the first outbreak at Tong Pass, O Prime Minister, the north bank of River Wei was undefended. Why did you not cross to the north bank from the east of the Yellow River? But instead, you engaged in attacking of the Pass for many days before crossing to the north bank.”

And he replied, “The rebels first held the Pass. Had I forthwith taken the east side of the Yellow River, the rebels would have defended the camps one by one and mustered at all the ferries, and I would never have gotten across to the west side, which was also the north bank of River Wei. So I massed troops against Tong Pass and made the rebels guard the south bank of River Wei so that the north bank was left open. Thus, Xu Huang and Zhu Ling could move there, and I was able later to cross over to join them. Then I made the raised road and the mud rampart to deceive the enemy and cause them to think I was weak and thus embolden them up to the point of attacking without proper preparation. Then, I used the clever device of

causing dissension in their ranks and was able in one day to destroy the stored-up energy of all their forces. 'It was a thunderclap before you could cover your ears.' Yes, indeed, the variations of the art of war can be called infinite."

"But one thing more puzzled us," said the officers, "and we ask you to explain it: when you heard the enemy was reinforced, you seemed to grow happier. Why was that?"

"Because Tong Pass is distant from Xuchang. If the rebels had taken advantage of all defensible points and held them, they could not have been quelled in less than a couple of years. When they came on altogether, they made a multitude, but they were not unanimous. They easily quarreled and, disunited, were easily overcome. So I had reason to rejoice that they came on altogether."

"Indeed, no one can equal you in strategy," said his officers, bowing low before him.

"Still, remember that I rely on you," said Cao Cao.

Then he issued substantial rewards to the army and appointed Xiahou Yuan to the command at Changan. The soldiers who had surrendered were distributed among the various troops. Xiahou Yuan recommended Zhang Jia of Gaoling as his aids.

So the army returned to Capital Xuchang, where it was welcomed by the Emperor in state chariot. As a reward for his service, Cao Cao was given the court privilege of omitting his distinctive name when he was received in audience and of proceeding toward the court without assuming the appearance of frantic haste. Further, he might go to court armed and booted, as did the Han Founding Minister Xiao He of old. Thence, his prestige and importance waxed mightily.

The fame of these doings penetrated west into Hanzhong, and one of the first to be moved to indignation was Zhang Lu, Governor of Hanning. This Zhang Lu was a native of Pei. He was a grandson of Zhang Ling who retired to Mount Humming in the East River Land, where he had composed a work on Daoism for the purpose of deluding the multitude.

Yet all the people respected Zhang Ling, and when he died, his son, Zhang Heng, carried on his work, and taught the same doctrines. Disciples had to pay a fee in rice: five carts. The people of his day called him the Rice Thief.

After Zhang Heng passed away, his son Zhang Lu followed in his steps. Zhang Lu styled himself "Master Superior," and his disciples were commonly called "Devil Soldiers." A headman was called "Libationer," and those who made many converts were called "Chief Libationers."

Perfect sincerity was the ruling tenet of the cult, and no deceit was permitted. When anyone fell ill, an altar was set up and the invalid was taken into the Room of Silence, where he could reflect upon his sins and confess openly. Then he was prayed for. The director of prayers was called "Superintending Libationer."

When praying for a person, they wrote his name and his confession on a slip and made three copies thereof, called "The Writing of the Three Gods." One copy was burned on the mountaintop as a means of informing Heaven, another was burned to inform Earth, and the third was sunk in water to tell the Controller of the Waters. If the sick person recovered, he paid as fee five carts of rice.

They had Public Houses of Charity wherein the poor found rice and flesh and means of cooking. Any wayfarer was allowed to take of these

according to the measure of his appetite. Those who took in excess would invite punishment from on high. Offenses were pardoned thrice; afterwards, offenders were punished. They had no officials but all were subject to the control of the Libationers.

This sort of cult had been spreading in Hanzhong for some thirty years and had escaped repression so far because of the remoteness of the region. All that the government did was to give Zhang Lu the title of General Who Guards the South and the post of Governor of Hanning and take means to secure from him a full quota of local tribute.

When the reports of Cao Cao's success against the west, and his prestige and influence, reached the Hanzhong people, Zhang Lu met with his counselors to discuss the matter.

Said Zhang Lu, "Ma Teng has died and Ma Chao been defeated; thus the northwest has fallen. Cao Cao's next ambition will be the southwest, and Hanzhong will be his first attack. I should act first by assuming the title of Prince of Hanzhong and superintending the defense."

In reply, one Yan Pu said, "The army of this region numbers one hundred thousand, and there are ample supplies of everything. East River Land is a natural stronghold with its mountains and rivers. Now Ma Chao's soldiers are newly defeated, and the fugitives from the Ziwu Valley are very numerous. We can add them to our army by several ten thousands more. My advice is that, as Liu Zhang of Yizhou is weak, we should take possession of the forty-one counties of the West River Land, and then you may set up your reign as soon as you like."

This speech greatly pleased Zhang Lu, who then began to concert measures with his brother, Zhang Wei, to raise an army.

Stories of this movement reached Yizhou, whose Imperial Protector was Liu Zhang. A son of Liu Yan, a descendant from Prince Gong of the Imperial House. Prince Gong had been moved out to Jingling several generations ago, and the family had settled there. Later, Liu Yan became Imperial Protector of Yizhou, and when he died in due course in the first year of Prosperous Stability (AD 194), his son was recommended for the vacant Protectorship.

There was enmity between Liu Zhang and Zhang Lu, for Liu Zhang had put to death Zhang Lu's mother and brother. After that, Liu Zhang dispatched Pang Xi as Governor of Baxi to ward off Zhang Lu.

But Liu Zhang had always been feeble, and when he received news from his commander of Zhang Lu's movements, his heart sank within him for fear, and he hastily called in his advisers.

At the council, one haughtily said, "My Master, be not alarmed. I am no genius, but I have a bit of a healthy tongue, and with that, I will make Zhang Lu afraid even to look this way."

When plots did grow about the west,
It suited Jingzhou's plans the best.

The speaker's name and lineage will be told in the next chapter.



END OF ACT XIV

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XV:

BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER:
THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE WEST

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XV

CHAPTER 60

ZHANG SONG TURNS THE TABLE ON YANG XIU; PANG TONG PROPOSES THE OCCUPATION OF SHU.

The man who proposed the plan spoken of in the last chapter was Zhang Song, who belonged to Yizhou and held the small office of Supernumerary Charioteer. He had a broad forehead, protuberant at the temples like a countryman's hoe, and a pointed head. His nose was flat, and his teeth protruded. He was a dwarf in stature but had a deep voice like a great bell.

"What proposal have you to offer that may avert this danger?" asked the Imperial Protector.

"My proposal is that we gain the support of Cao Cao. As we know, he has made a clean sweep of the empire. Lu Bu went first, and both the Yuans followed, all exterminated. Lately, he has destroyed Ma Chao. In short he is the one man against whom no one can stand. Therefore, my lord, prepare me worthy gifts to take to the capital, and I will get Cao Cao to march an army against Hanzhong, which will keep this Zhang Lu occupied so that we shall be left alone."

This met Liu Zhang's views, and so he prepared gold and pearls and rich stuffs, worthy presents for the man of power. And when these were ready, he appointed Zhang Song his emissary.

Zhang Song, in the meantime, occupied his leisure in secretly copying maps and plans of the west country. When all was ready, he started with a small escort.

They heard this in Jingzhou, and Zhuge Liang sent a trusty person to the capital to keep him informed as to all the doings.

Zhang Song arrived in Xuchang, and, after he had established himself in his lodging, he made daily visits to the Prime Minister's palace to try to obtain an interview. But the last success over Ma Chao had filled Cao Cao with insufferable pride, and he did nothing but give banquets. He never appeared except for the most important affairs, and even carried on the business of the state in his own residence. So Zhang Song waited many days. But when he got to know the persons who were nearest the Prime Minister, he bribed them and obtained an audience.

Cao Cao was seated in the high place, and after his visitor had finished salutations, he said, "Your master, Liu Zhang, has sent no tribute for several years. Why?"

"Because the roads are dangerous, and thieves and robbers infest them. Intercourse is restricted."

Cao Cao interrupted in a loud harsh voice, saying, "What thieves and robbers are there, when I have cleansed the empire?"

"How can you say the land is tranquil when one sees Sun Quan in the south, Zhang Lu and Liu Bei in the west, and every one of these with armies reckoned in legions? The weakest of them has one hundred thousand troops."

The extraordinary appearance of the emissary had prejudiced Cao Cao from the outset, and when Cao Cao heard these blunt words, he suddenly shook out his sleeves, rose, and left the hall.

Those in attendance were annoyed with Zhang Song and said, "How can you behave so rudely when you come on a mission? Your whole attitude was blunt and discourteous. Happily for you, our lord remembered you had come from afar and did not take open notice of your fault. The best thing for you is to go home again as quickly as you can."

But Zhang Song smiled. "We have no plausible flatterers and glib talkers in the River Lands," said he.

At this, one from below the steps called out, "So you call us plausible and glib then. And you have none such in your country, eh?"

Zhang Song looked around and saw the speaker was a man with thin, delicate eyebrows crossing narrow eyes set in a pale spiritual face. He asked his name. It was Yang Xiu, son of the former Imperial Guardian Yang Biao. The young man was then employed as Chair of the Secretariat of the Prime Minister's palace. He was deeply read and had the reputation of being a clever controversialist, as Zhang Song knew.

So on one side was a desire to confound and on the other overweening pride in his own ability, with contempt for other scholars. Perceiving the ridicule in Zhang Song's speech, Yang Xiu invited him to go to the library where they could talk more freely. There, after they had got settled in their respective places, Yang Xiu began to talk about the west.

"Your roads are precipitous and wearisome," said Yang Xiu.

"But at our lord's command we travel, even through fire and water. We never decline," replied Zhang Song.

"What sort of a country is this Yizhou?"

"Yizhou is a name for the group of western counties and territories known of old as the state of Shu. The roads are intersected by streams, and the land bristles with steep mountains. The circuit is over two hundred

stations and marches, and the area over one hundred thousand square miles. The population is dense, villages being so close that the crowings of cocks in one waken the people in the next, and the dogs barking in this excite the curs in that. The soil is rich and well-cultivated, and droughts or famines are equally unknown. Prosperity is general, and the music of pipes and strings can always be heard. The produce of the fields is piled mountain-high. There is no place its equal."

"But what of the people?"

"Our administrators are talented as Lin Xiangru; our soldiers able as Ma Yuan; our physicians are expert as Zhang Ji; our diviners are profound as Yan Zun. Our schools of philosophy and our culture stand forth as models, and we have more remarkable people than I can enumerate. How should I ever finish the tale of them?"

"And how many such as you, Sir, do you think there are at the orders of your Imperial Protector?"

"Our officers are all geniuses: wise, bold, loyal, righteous, and magnanimous. As for poor simpletons like me: they are counted by hundreds; there are cartloads of them, bushels of them. No one could count them."

"What office may you hold then?"

Zhang Song replied, "Mine can hardly be called an office. I am a Supernumerary Charioteer. But, Sir, what state affairs may you control?"

"I am the First Secretary in the Palace of the Prime Minister," replied Yang Xiu.

"They say that members of your family held office for many generations, and I do not understand why you are not in court service

actually assisting the Emperor, instead of filling the post of a mere clerk in the private palace of the Prime Minister.”

Yang Xiu’s face suffused with shame at this rebuke, but he mastered himself and replied, “Though I am among the minor officials, yet my duties are of great importance, and I am gaining experience under the Prime Minister’s guidance. I hold the office for the sake of the training.”

Zhang Song smiled, saying, “If what I have heard is true, Cao Cao’s learning throws no gleaming light on the way of Confucius or Mencius, nor does his military skill illumine the art of Sun Zi or Wu Qi. He seems to understand the doctrine of brute force and holding on to what advantages he can seize, but I see not how he can give you any valuable training or enlighten your understanding.”

“Ah, Sir, that comes of dwelling in out-of-the-way parts. How could you know of the magnificent talents of the great Prime Minister? But I will show you something.”

Yang Xiu called up an attendant and bade him bring a book from a certain case. He showed this to his guest, who read the title, *The New Book of Cao Cao*. Then Zhang Song opened it and read it through from the beginning, the whole thirteen chapters. They all dealt with the art of war.

“What do you take this to be?” asked Zhang Song when he had finished.

“This is the great Prime Minister’s discussion of the art of ancient and modern war composed on the model of Sun Zi’s *Treatise on the Art of War*. You may be disdainful of the Prime Minister’s talents, but will this not go down to posterity?”

“This book! Every child in Yizhou knows this by heart. What do you mean by calling it a new book? It was written by some obscure person of

the time of the Warring States, and Cao Cao has plagiarized it. But he has deceived no one but you, Sir.”

“But what is the use of your sarcastic insult in saying that your schoolchildren know the book by rote? It has never been given to the world, although copies have been made. It belongs to his private library.”

“Do you disbelieve me? Why, I know it and could repeat it.” Then Zhang Song repeated the whole book, word for word, from beginning to end.

Yang Xiu said, “You remember it like this after only one reading! Really, you are marvelous.”



He boasted not a handsome face,
Nor was his body blessed with grace.
His words streamed like a waterfall,
He read a book and knew it all.
Shu's glories could he well rehearse,
His lore embraced the universe.
Or text or note of scholiast
Once read, his memory held fast.

At leave-taking, Yang Xiu said, “Remain a while in your lodgings till I can petition our Prime Minister to give you another interview.”

Zhang Song thanked him and left.

By and by, Yang Xiu went to see Cao Cao on the matter of receiving the emissary from the west and said, "Sir, why did you formerly treat Zhang Song so off-hand?"

"He spoke very rudely. That is why."

"But you bore with Mi Heng. Why not with this man?"

"Mi Heng's reputation for scholarship stood highest of all, and I could not bear to put him to death. But what ability has this Zhang Song?"

"To say nothing about his speech being like the River of Heaven, nothing daunts his talent for dialectic. I happened to show him your new treatise; he read it over once and could repeat it. From this, it is evident he is cultured and has a prodigious memory. There are few like him in the world. But he said the book was the work of an obscure person of a few hundred years back, and every schoolchild in his country knew it."

"It only shows that the ancients and I are in secret sympathy," replied Cao Cao. However, Cao Cao ordered the book to be torn up and burned.

"Then may I bring him to see you, Sir, that he may see the glory of our court?"

Cao Cao grudgingly consented, saying "I am reviewing troops tomorrow on the western parade ground. You may bring him there and let him see what my army looks like. He will be able to talk about it when he goes home. When I have dealt with the south, I shall take the west in hand."

Hence, the very next day Yang Xiu took Zhang Song over to the west parade ground, where a review of the Tiger Guard was to be held. There were fifty thousand of them, and when drawn up in order, they made a very brave show with their gleaming helmets and bright new uniforms. Their drums rolled to shake the heavens, and their weapons glittered in the sun.

Their discipline and order were perfect. Their gay banners fluttered in the breeze. They looked ready to fly even, so alert and smart were they.

Zhang Song glanced at them contemptuously.

After a long time Cao Cao called up Zhang Song and, pointing to his army, said, "Have you ever seen such fine bold fellows in Yizhou?"

"We never see this military parade in Yizhou. We govern the people by righteousness."

Cao Cao changed color and looked hard at the bold speaker, who gazed back at him without the least sign of fear.

Yang Xiu shot a quick glance at Zhang Song, but Cao Cao went on, saying, "I regard the rat-class of the world as of no more importance than so many weeds, and for my army to reach a place is to overcome it, to give battle is to conquer, to besiege is to take. Those who are with me live; those who oppose me die. Do you understand?"

"O Prime Minister, I know well that when you march out your army, you always conquer. I knew it when you attacked Lu Bu at Puyang, when you fought Zhang Xiu at Wancheng, when you met Zhou Yu at the Red Cliffs, when in Huarong Valley you encountered Guan Yu, on that day when you cut off your beard and threw away your robe at Tong Pass, and when you hid in a boat to escape the arrows on the Yellow River. On all these occasions, no one could stand against you."

It made Cao Cao very angry to be thus twitted with his misfortunes, and he said, "You stuck-up pedant! How dare you thus bring up all my failures?" Cao Cao called to his attendants to eject the bold disputant and put him to death.

Yang Xiu ventured to argue with him, saying, "You may behead him, but he came from the west bearing tribute, and his death would have a very

evil effect on all distant peoples.”

But Cao Cao was too angry to be reasonable and persisted. However, Xun Yu also remonstrated, and Zhang Song was not put to death. But he was beaten and ejected. He returned to his lodging and left the city that night, reflecting upon what he had intended and what he had accomplished.

Thought he, *I did not expect such arrogance when I came with the intention of giving him a region. When I get back, Liu Zhang will expect great things. Now I am returning empty-handed and a failure to endure the laughter of my fellow countrypeople. I will not go back. I have heard of the virtues of Liu Bei, and I will go to him and see what manner of man he is. Then I can decide what to do.*

So with his little escort and following, he made for Jingzhou. He had reached the boundaries of Wuchang when he met a body of horsemen, at the head of whom rode a general in simple dress.

The general pulled up, saying, “Surely you are the Charioteer Zhang Song.”

“I am he,” said Zhang Song.

The general quickly dismounted and humbly said, “I have expected you these many days. I am Zhao Yun.”

Zhang Song dismounted and returned the salutation, saying, “Then you are no other than the Fine Man of Changshan.”

“No other,” was the reply. “And my lord Liu Bei bade me await you here and offer you refreshment after your long and toilsome journey.”

At this, some soldiers brought forward wine and food which they offered kneeling.

Zhang Song said, “I am come because the world says Liu Bei is liberal and kindly disposed.”

After a few cups of wine, the two retook the road toward Jingzhou City, which they neared next day at evening. They went to the guesthouse. Here, they found a large number of people who received the visitor with the beating of drums and every sign of respect.

And the officer in command, bowing low, said, "My Brother sent me to meet you after your long and dusty journey and prepare the guesthouse for your reception. My name is Guan Yu."

So Zhang Song and Zhao Yun dismounted and entered the guesthouse, where hosts and guest exchanged formal salutations and took their seats. In a short time, refreshments were served, and both men were most diligent in their attention to the traveler. This roadside banquet was prolonged to the time of setting the watch, when they prepared for rest.

Next morning, after the early meal, they mounted and continued their journey. Very soon, they met Liu Bei himself, with an escort, and his two chief advisers, deferentially standing by the roadside.

As soon as he recognized them, Zhang Song dismounted and walked toward them. Liu Bei received him with extreme respect.

"Your exalted name has been long known to me," said Liu Bei. "And it has reverberated through my ears. My one regret is that cloudy hills and long distances have hitherto prevented me from enjoying the advantage of your instruction. Hearing that you were passing through, I have come to meet you. And if you would be willing to notice me and condescend to rest for a time in my city, thus allowing me to satisfy my long-disappointed desire to see you, I should indeed hold myself fortunate."

Naturally, the traveler's vanity was tickled, and he joyfully remounted. They rode bridle-to-bridle into the city. When they reached the residence, again they exchanged profound salutations and compliments before they took their various places as host and guest. And then a banquet was served.

But all throughout, Liu Bei refrained from saying a word about the west. He only chatted on general and common things.

The visitor noted this steady avoidance and resolved to probe his host's thoughts.

"How many counties are there in Jingzhou, where you are now, O Imperial Uncle?"

Zhuge Liang replied, "Jingzhou is only ours temporarily. We have borrowed it from the South Land. They are always sending messengers to demand its return. However, now that our lord has married their daughter, his position is more secure. But it is still temporary."

"The South Land is large," said Zhang Song, "yet their six territories and their eighty-one counties do not satisfy them. The people are strong, and the land is fruitful."

Said Pang Tong, "Our lord, being of the dynastic family, has never occupied a territory of the empire. Those others, rebellious as they are, may indeed seize upon as much territory as they are strong enough to hold. People of reason do not approve such wrongs..."

"Noble Sirs, pray say no more. What virtue have I that I should expect anything from the future?" said Liu Bei.

"Not so, indeed," said Zhang Song. "Illustrious Sir, you are of the lineage of Han. Your noble character is widely known. No one could say that your fate excludes all thoughts of occupying territory where you might begin to set up authority and take an emperor's position!"

Liu Bei deprecated such a suggestion, "Sir, you go too far. This really is too much!"

The next three days were spent in banquets and wine parties, but all the time no mention was made of the West River Land. And when, at the end of that time, Zhang Song took leave, his host was at the three-mile “parting road” to bid him farewell and offer refreshment.

When the moment came for the parting, Liu Bei raised his wine cup and said, “I am sincerely grateful that you deigned to come here. You have prolonged your visit to three days, but now the moment of parting has come. Who knows when I may have the privilege of receiving your instructions again?”

As Liu Bei said this, the tears flowed, but he hid them while Zhang Song, willing to believe that this emotion was on his account, thought how wonderfully kind and noble his host must be to be thus affected. Quite overcome, Zhang Song decided to speak about the west.

So he said, “I have thought that I, too, would come to you one day, but so far I have found no way. In Jingzhou, I see Sun Quan on the east, always ready to pounce; I see Cao Cao on the north, greedy to swallow. So this is not a wholly desirable place for you to remain in.”

“I know this but too well,” said Liu Bei, “but I have no secure place to go to.”

“Yizhou is well-protected, has much fertile soil, is populous and well-governed. Its scholars are attracted by your virtue. If you marched your armies westward, you could easily become a real power there and restore the glory of the Hans.”

“But how dare I attempt this? The ruler is also of the Imperial House. The whole region is devoted to him for his good deeds, and no other person could attain such a hold.”

“I am no traitor,” said Zhang Song, “but in your presence I feel constrained to be perfectly open and plain. Liu Zhang, the Imperial Protector of Yizhou, is naturally weak and can neither use the wise nor employ the capable. Then, again, Zhang Lu threatens on the north. People are distracted and would gladly welcome an appreciative ruler. The journey I have just made was to propose to support Cao Cao and place the region under him, but I found him rebellious and set on evil, proud and arrogant. So I have turned aside to you.

“If you will take Yizhou, you will have a base from which to deal with Hanzhong when you will, and the whole empire beside. You will continue the rightful line, and your name will live in history. Would not that be real fame? If then you think of taking our region, I am willing to do what little I can as an ally within. But do you contemplate such a step?”

“I am deeply grateful that you think so well of me. But the Imperial Protector being a member of the family, I would lay myself open to general execration were I to attack him.”

“When a hero finds himself in the world, his duty is to work out his destiny, to exert himself and perform his task as best as he can, to press forward among the foremost. At the moment, the position is that if you fail to seize this opportunity, some other will take possession of Yizhou, and you will regret when too late.”

“And I have heard much of the difficult nature of the country, its many high mountains and numerous streams, and its narrow roads. How could such a country be invaded?”

Then Zhang Song drew the map from his sleeve, saying, “I am so deeply affected by your virtue that I offer you this map of the country, whereby its roads and rivers may be known.”

Liu Bei unrolled the map. It was covered with notes, on the lie of the land, lengths and widths, and such matters. Strategic points on rivers and hills were shown, and storehouses and granaries and treasuries. Everything was plainly stated.

Zhang Song went on, "Sir, you can prepare your plans promptly. I have two friends who will certainly help you. And when they come to see you, you may be perfectly frank with them. Their names are Fa Zheng and Meng Da."

Liu Bei thanked him with joined hands, saying, "As the blue mountains grow not old and the green waters always remain, so shall I never forget. And when I shall have accomplished my task, you shall have no mean reward."

Replied Zhang Song, "I look for no reward. Having met with an enlightened lord, I felt compelled to unbosom myself to him."

Zhang Song left soon after, and Guan Yu escorted him for several miles.

After arrival in Yizhou, Zhang Song lost no time in visiting his close friend Fa Zheng, who was from Fufeng. Fa Zheng was told of Cao Cao's arrogance and haughtiness toward scholars and good people.

"As for the man himself," said Zhang Song, "he is a man to grieve with but not a person to rejoice with. I have promised Yizhou to Liu Bei, the Imperial Uncle, and I want your especial advice and assistance."

"I think Liu Zhang is incapable," said Fa Zheng, "and I have felt drawn to Liu Bei for some time past. So we are in sympathy here."

Shortly after, Meng Da arrived. Meng Da and Fa Zheng were fellow townsmen. When Meng Da entered the room, he saw the other two in earnest and secret conversation. And he said, "I know what you two are about. You are scheming to hand over Yizhou to somebody."

"It is really so. You have guessed right," said Zhang Song.

"But to whom ought it go?" said Fa Zheng.

"There is but one: Liu Bei," said Meng Da.

All three clapped their hands and laughed.

Then, said Fa Zheng to Zhang Song, "You will see our lord tomorrow. What about that?"

"I shall recommend that you two be sent to Jingzhou on a mission."

They thought that a suitable scheme.

And when the newly-arrived messenger saw his master and was asked how he had fared, Zhang Song said, "Cao Cao is a rebel who desires to get the whole empire into his hands. I need hardly tell you that. But he also hankers after this region."

"Then what will become of us?" said Liu Zhang.

"I have a plan to check both our enemies. Liu Bei, the Imperial Uncle, now in Jingzhou, is a relative of yours, and he is generous and well-disposed. This is a matter of common knowledge. Cao Cao was simply overwhelmed at the result of the battle at the Red Cliffs, and Zhang Lu more so. Now, my plan is that you ally yourself with your distinguished relative against Cao Cao and Zhang Lu."

"I have been thinking thus for a long time. Can you recommend a suitable emissary?"

"The only ones are Fa Zheng and Meng Da."

These two were summoned and, meanwhile, a letter was prepared. Fa Zheng was to proceed as emissary to open up friendly relations, and Meng Da would follow in due course with an army to welcome Liu Bei into the West River Land.

While still discussing the details of the policy, a person forced his way in, his face all running with sweat, and cried out, "My lord, your land of forty-one counties will be lost to you and pass to another if you listen to Zhang Song!"

Zhang Song turned a startled look on the intruder, who was Huang Quan of Xiliang, First Secretary in the Imperial Protector's palace.

The Imperial Protector said, "Why do you use such language? Liu Bei is of my family, and so I am seeking his support."

Said Huang Quan, "I know all about him. He is liberal-minded to gain people to his side, and his softness can overcome the hardest. He is bolder than any other. He gains humans' hearts from afar off, and those near him look up to him. He also has the wisest advisers in Zhuge Liang and Pang Tong, and the boldest warriors such as Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun, Huang Zhong, and Wei Yan. But if you call him here as a soldier, think you that he will be content to remain in a lowly condition? And if you treat him as an honored guest, can a state stand two rulers? Hear me, my lord, and you stand secure as the Taishan Mountains; be deaf to my words, and your position is as precarious as a pile of eggs. This Zhang Song has lately come home through Jingzhou, where he has certainly been plotting with Liu Bei. Slay this man, and make an end of Liu Bei. That will be for the happiness of this land."

"But how else am I to fend off my two enemies?"

"Fortify your country, dig out your moats, and raise your ramparts. Then you can wait on events."

“If these rebels invade this land, the position will be critical, as when fire singes one’s eyebrows. It is idle talk to tell me to wait on events.”

No notice was taken of Huang Quan, and Fa Zheng was about to set out when another interfered, crying, “No, no!” This was a secretary, Wang Lei.

With bowed head, Wang Lei stood and said, “My lord will bring misfortune upon himself if he listens to this Zhang Song.”

“Not so; I make an alliance with Liu Bei in order to withstand Zhang Lu.”

“Zhang Lu’s invasion would be but a skin disease. Liu Bei’s entry into this country would be a mortal malady. Liu Bei is an unscrupulous brave. He was once in Cao Cao’s service and plotted against him. Then he hung on to Sun Quan and seized Jingzhou. This shows his character and his designs. Think you that you two can dwell together? If you invite him, then Shu is lost!”

“No more wild talk!” cried Liu Zhang angrily. “Liu Bei is of my clan and family and will not ravish me of my possessions.”

He bade the guards escort both men outside and ordered Fa Zheng to set out. So he did, and before long came to Jingzhou. When the salutations were over, Fa Zheng presented his letter, which Liu Bei opened and read:

“I, Liu Zhang, a younger brother of our family, now write to General Liu Bei. From my humble place, long have I gazed in your direction, but the roads of the West River Land are precipitous, and I have failed to send my tribute. This is to my shame. The victims of misfortune aid each other, and those in trouble support each other. If friends act thus, how much more should members of the same family? Now, Zhang Lu is mustering an army of invasion on my northern

frontier, much to the injury of my tranquility. Wherefore I send this letter that you may know of my distress. And if you remember the kindly bonds of family and will play a brotherly part and lead your armies to destroy these ruffians, you will be my eternal protector and I shall be ever grateful. This letter leaves much unsaid, but I await your coming.”

This letter greatly pleased Liu Bei. He made a banquet for the bearer thereof, and when they had mellowed themselves with wine, he dismissed the attendants and spoke to Fa Zheng in confidence.

“Friend, I have long admired you, and Zhang Song extolled your virtues. I shall always feel grateful for this opportunity of hearing you.”

Fa Zheng bowed, saying, “That is too great praise for a humble emissary from Shu. But they say that horses always neighed in recognition of Bo Le, the supreme judge of horses, and when a person has found his lord, he dies for him. Have you thought further of Zhang Song’s proposals, General?”

“I have always been a wanderer, often in suffering and sorrow. I have often thought of the wren, for even that tiny bird has a twig to rest on; of the cunning hare, that secures safety with three openings to its burrow. Does not a person need at least a shelter? Your Land of the West is fertile and a temptation, but its ruler is of my family, and I cannot plot against him.”

“Yes. Yizhou is a very paradise. But without a ruler, it cannot exist. Liu Zhang knows not how to use wise people, and his heritage must speedily pass to another. Today it is offered to your hands, and you must not miss the opportunity. You know the saying, that the leader in the hunt gets the quarry. If you will only consent, I will serve you to the death.”

Liu Bei signified his gratitude. Said he, “Let me reflect for a time and take advice.”

The banquet terminated, and the guest left. Zhuge Liang conducted Fa Zheng to his lodging while his master sat thinking.

Then Pang Tong said, “You must decide—not to decide is foolish. You are of high intelligence, my lord, and why do you hesitate?”

“What should my reply be?” asked Liu Bei.

“You know these surroundings—Sun Quan in the east and Cao Cao in the north—and with them, you cannot attain your ends. Now before you lies a populous, fertile, and rich land, a base with the greatest possibilities. You have the promise of assistance from two men within, and it seems like a gift of providence. Why hesitate?”

“Presently there are two men in the world as mutually antagonistic as fire and water. My opposite is Cao Cao. He is impetuous and I am long suffering; he is cruel and I am humane; he feigns while I am true. In all particulars, I act the direct contrary to him. I refuse to risk the loss of the confidence and trust of the world for a trifling advantage.”

Pang Tong smiled at these sentiments, saying, “My lord’s words are quite in accord with abstract rectitude, but such ideas scarcely suit the days of rebellion. There are other ways of fighting than with warlike weapons, but to adhere too obstinately to the idea of abstract rectitude is to do nothing. One must be an opportunist, annex the weak and attack the willfully deluded, seize the recalcitrant and protect the docile. These were the teachings of the great Kings Tang and Wu. If after the settlement, you reward with righteousness and make of the land a great country, will you be guilty of a breach of trust? Remember: if you do not take it now, another will.”

Liu Bei, realizing the truth in what Pang Tong said, replied, "These words are as jewels. They should be engraved on my very heart."

Thereupon, he summoned Zhuge Liang to settle the details of an army to march west.

Zhuce Liang said, "This is an important place and must be very well-defended."

Liu Bei replied, "I, Pang Tong, and my two generals Huang Zhong and Wei Yan will go into the west. You and our three best generals—Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun—can defend Jingzhou."

Guan Yu was told off to hold Xiangyang and the narrow pass at Qingni, Zhang Fei commanded four territories along the river, and Zhao Yun camped at Jiangling.

For the march westward, Huang Zhong led the van and Wei Yan had the rearguard, while Liu Bei moved in the center with Liu Feng and Guan Ping as his aids. Pang Tong was Commander of the whole army.

Just as the fifty thousand troops were starting, there came Liao Hua to offer his service. He and his troops were attached to Guan Yu.

It was in the winter that the expedition started. Soon they met the force under Meng Da, five thousand soldiers, to act as escort into Yizhou. Liu Bei informed Liu Zhang that he had started, and the latter sent orders to the counties along the road to entertain them well on the march.

The Imperial Protector proposed to go out in person to welcome Liu Bei and ordered carriages to be prepared and tents and banners. All the escort were dressed in glittering armor. At this, Secretary Huang Quan, the sturdy opponent of the invitation to Liu Bei, again remonstrated.

“My lord, if you go out, you will be exposed to danger. I have been in your service for many years, and I would prevent you from being the victim of another’s wiles. I pray you reflect.”

Zhang Song said, “His words are those of one who would sow discord in a family and encourage the power of the robbers who threaten you. Assuredly, such action is to your detriment.”

Liu Zhang then spoke angrily to Huang Quan, saying, “I have decided, so why do you oppose me?”

The objector bowed his head and wept. Then approaching nearer, he seized hold of the Imperial Protector’s robe with his teeth to hinder him. Liu Zhang angrily shook his robe and rose from his seat, but Huang Quan still held on till two of his teeth fell out. Then the guards forced him away, and he retired, still crying.

As Liu Zhang was starting, another man cried, “My lord, do you neglect the loyal words of your faithful Huang Quan to go to your death?” And he threw himself prostrate at the steps in remonstrance. He was Li Hui of Jianning.

“The prince may have ministers who remonstrate with him, and the father may have children who oppose,” said Li Hui. “Huang Quan has spoken faithfully, and you ought to listen. To let Liu Bei into this land is to welcome the tiger into your gates.”

“Liu Bei is my brother and will not harm me,” said the Imperial Protector. “And any other who shall oppose me shall suffer death.”

So Li Hui was thrust out.

“The officers of Shu regard the safety of their families and no longer render you service. The generals are arrogant, and each has some scheme of his own to further. If you do not get Liu Bei to oppose the enemy without,

and your own people oppose you within, surely you are on the road to ruin.”

So spoke Zhang Song, and the Imperial Protector replied, “I know the plan is for my advantage.”

Whereupon, he mounted his horse to ride out to Elm Tree Bridge.

Then, a messenger reported to him: “Wang Lei has suspended himself, head downwards, at the city gate. In one hand, he holds a written remonstrance, and in the other, a knife. And he says that if you heed him not, he will cut the rope and die at your feet.”

Liu Zhang went to the gate, took the writing and read:

“Good medicine is bitter in the mouth but good for the disease; faithful words offend the ear but are good for the conduct. Of old King Huai of Chu listened not to Qu Yuan, but attended the meeting at Wu Pass and was captured by the state of Qin. Sir, you are thoughtlessly leaving your place to go to welcome Liu Bei, but I fear there is a way out and none in. Could you but behead Zhang Song in the marketplace and have nothing to do with this league with Liu Bei, it would be for the happiness of old and young, and assure the safety of yourself.”

Anger rose in Liu Zhang’s breast as he read. “Why do you insult me when I go to meet a kindly man, when I feel as if I were about to enjoy the delight of seeing brother?”

At this, Wang Lei gave a great cry, severed the rope, and fell to the ground battered and dead.



Head-downwards at the city gate one hung

A last remonstrance in his outstretched hand.
Resolved that, were his words rejected, he
Would not survive defeat. Sincere was he
Who, desperate, held to Liu Zhang's silken robe
Until his broken teeth released their grip.
Sincere indeed, but how can he compare
With stern Wang Lei who went to awful death?



Liu Zhang with thirty thousand troops went out to welcome his clansman,
and there followed one thousand wagons laden with supplies and rich stuffs.

Liu Bei's advanced guard had arrived at River Dian. During the march, the people had brought presents, and Liu Bei had given an order to pay for everything, under penalty of death for disobedience. Thus, no one suffered, and the people came out in trusting crowds to watch the soldiers marching by and welcome them in every way. Liu Bei soothed them with very gracious words.

Then, Fa Zheng secretly showed Pang Tong a letter from Zhang Song advocating the assassination of Liu Zhang near the place of welcome.

Pang Tong said, "Say nothing about this. After the two Lius have met, there may be opportunities, but this is too early to talk. Any plot would leak out."

So nothing was said.

Fucheng, where the meeting was to take place, was one hundred twenty miles from Capital Chengdu. Liu Zhang arrived first and sent messengers to welcome Liu Bei. The two armies camped on the bank of River Fu. Liu Bei went into the city to see the Imperial Protector, and they met cordially as brothers should. Both shed a few tears, and by and by, they began a heart-to-heart talk. Then followed a banquet, and after this, each returned to his own camp.

The Imperial Protector said, "How ridiculous have been proven the fears of Huang Quan and Wang Lei! They do not understand the force of family affection. I see he is really a kindly and noble man, and with him as a support, I shall fear neither Cao Cao nor Zhang Lu. And I owe all this to Zhang Song."

To show his gratitude, Liu Zhang took off the green, silken robe he wore and sent it as a gift to Zhang Song, together with five hundred ounces of gold.

However, some of his officers were not so content, and a group of them bade him beware.

"Do not rejoice too soon, O Master," said they, "for Liu Bei is hard enough within, in spite of his mild exterior. You have not sounded him yet and should be on your guard."

"You are all too anxious," said Liu Zhang, laughing. "My brother is no double-dealer, I am sure."

When Liu Bei had returned to his own tent, Pang Tong came in to ask what impression he had of his host of that day.

"He seems a very honest man," said Liu Bei.

“He is good enough, but some of his servants are discontented at this turn of affairs, and I would not guarantee there will be no murders. If you took my advice, you would have Liu Zhang assassinated at the return banquet. A hundred ruffians behind the arras, a signal from you, and the deed would be accomplished. All that would be needed, then would be a rush on Capital Chengdu. No sword need be drawn, no arrow fitted to the string.”

“He is a brother of my house and has treated me with sincerity. I am a newcomer and so far unknown in this land. Such a deed would be abhorrent to all the world, and these people would resent it. I will not establish myself by such means.”

“The scheme is not mine. It originated in a private letter from Zhang Song, who says it will have to be done some time.”

At this moment, Fa Zheng came in and said, “This is not for ourselves. It is the will of heaven.”

“Liu Zhang and I are of the same house, and I would shudder at harming him,” said Liu Bei.

“Sir, you are wrong. If you act not as we propose, then Zhang Lu will take Shu in revenge for the death of his mother. What is there for you at the end of your long march? Advance, and success is yours; retreat, and you have nothing. And delays are most dangerous. At any moment, this scheme may leak out, and another will reap the profit. This is the day when Heaven smiles on you. Act before Liu Zhang suspects you. Establish yourself.”

So urged Fa Zheng, and Pang Tong backed it.

Their lord, by argument, they tried

From rectitude to turn aside.

What Liu Bei hid in his heart will be explained in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XV

CHAPTER 61

IN THE RIVER, ZHAO YUN RECOVERS LIU SHAN; WITH ONE LETTER,
SUN QUAN REPULSES CAO CAO.

In spite of the persuasion of Pang Tong and Fa Zheng, Liu Bei steadily refused to sanction the assassination of his host, Imperial Protector Liu Zhang, at the banquet, even if thereby he was to gain possession of the West River Land.

The next day, there was another banquet, this time in the city of Fucheng, whereat host and guest unbosomed themselves freely to each other and became exceedingly friendly and affectionate.

All were mellow with wine, and Pang Tong, talking with Fa Zheng, said, "Since our master will have nothing to do with our scheme, we had better set Wei Yan's swordplay to work and take advantage of the confusion to kill Liu Zhang."

Wei Yan came in shortly afterward, with his sword drawn, and said, "There being no other entertainment at this banquet, may I show you a little fencing to amuse you?"

Thereupon, Pang Tong called up some of the armed guards and ranged them along the lower part of the hall till Wei Yan should fall on.

At these preparations, the officers of Liu Zhang stared with questioning eyes toward the chief seats at the upper end.

Then, one of them, Zhang Ren, drew his sword, saying, "An opponent is needed to make fencing a success, so he and I will display our skill at the same time."

So they began. Presently, at a glance from Wei Yan, Liu Feng came up and took position at his side.

At once, three of the commanders of the West followed suit, saying, "And we three will come in too. It may add to your amusement and help to raise a laugh."

But to Liu Bei, matters began to take on a serious look. Drawing the sword of a servant, he stood out in the banquet hall and cried, "We brothers have perhaps honored our meeting with a little too much wine. There is nothing to say against that, but this is no Hongmen Banquet, where murder was done. Put up your swords, or I will slay you!"

"Why wear swords at all at a meeting of two brothers?" cried Liu Zhang, at the same time telling his servants to surround his officers and take away their weapons.

Disarmed, they sulkily withdrew.

Then Liu Bei called all the generals of Liu Zhang to the upper end of the banquet hall, gave them wine, and said, "You need have no doubts. We two brothers, of the same bone and blood, have talked over the great design, and we are one in purpose."

The officers bowed and retired.

Liu Zhang took his guest by the hand, saying, "Brother, I shall never forget your kindness."

They sat drinking till late, both feeling very happy. When at length Liu Bei reached his camp, he blamed his strategist for having caused the confusion.

"Why did you endeavor to force me into committing a great wrong?" said Liu Bei. "There must be no repetition of this."

Pang Tong retired, sighing.

When Liu Zhang reached his own camp, his leaders waited on him and said, "Sir, you saw the real meaning of that occurrence at the banquet, we suppose. We think it prudent for you to retire at once into the city."

"My brother is different from ordinary men," replied Liu Zhang.

"He may not incline toward murder himself, but those about him have but one desire—that is to exploit this land of ours to their own advantage."

"Do not try to sow dissension between us and make us quarrel," said their chief.

And Liu Zhang took no heed of their remonstrance.

One day, when Liu Zhang and Liu Bei were enjoying together relaxation from cares of state, the news came that Zhang Lu was about to invade the West River Land at the Jiameng Pass. Thereupon, the Imperial Protector begged Liu Bei to go and defend it. Liu Bei consented and left immediately with his own especial band.

At once, Liu Zhang's officers took advantage of the guest's departure to urge the Imperial Protector to place his own trusty generals in command at various strategic points, so as to guard against any attempts of the visitors to seize the land. At first, Liu Zhang was unwilling and refused, but as they prayed him most earnestly to do this he yielded and consented to take some steps to safeguard himself. He sent Yang Huai, Commander of Baishui, and Gao Pei to garrison River Fu Pass.

So Liu Zhang returned to Chengdu and his guest, Liu Bei, went away to the point where invasion threatened. Having arrived there, Liu Bei soon won the hearts of the people by the strict discipline he maintained over his army and by his gracious manner.

News of these doings in the west duly reached the south, and Sun Quan summoned his counselors as to his counter-move.

Then, Gu Yong spoke, saying, "I have an infallible plan to propose. Liu Bei and his army are now far away and separated from us by difficult country. Therefore he cannot return quickly, and my advice is to occupy the passes so that he cannot get through. Then, send all your force against Jingzhou and Xiangyang, and they will surely fall to you."

"The plan seems excellent," said Sun Quan.

But just then, a voice was heard from behind the screen, crying, "You may just put to death the man who proposed that scheme for trying to compass the death of my daughter."

Everyone started with surprise. It was the Dowager Marchioness' voice.

Further, Lady Wu looked very angry as she entered, saying, "What is to become of my only daughter, who is the wife of Liu Bei?" She turned her wrathful eyes to Sun Quan and said, "You were heir to your father and brother and obtained possession of all these lands without the least effort. Yet you are dissatisfied and would forget the claims of your own flesh and blood and sacrifice your sister for the sake of adding a little to your lands."

"No, no!" murmured Sun Quan, ashamed. "I would never think of going contrary to my mother's wishes and orders."

He abruptly dismissed the assembly, and when they had gone, the old lady, still nursing her wrath, retired to her own apartments.

Left alone beneath the portico, Sun Quan sighed sadly. "This chance missed! When will Jingzhou be mine?" thought he.

His general still deep in reverie, Zhang Zhao came up, saying, "What grieves my lord?"

"No great matter: only this last failure to gain my ends."

"The difficulty may be easily removed," said Zhang Zhao. "Choose some trusty man and charge him with a secret letter to Lady Sun Ren saying that her mother is dangerously ill. Give him five hundred men as escort and tell him to make his way privily into Jingzhou City and deliver the letter. Hearing her mother wants her, she will rush home at once, and she might bring with her the only son of Liu Bei. Liu Bei will be glad enough to exchange Jingzhou for his son. If he will not, you can still send the army."

"That sounds like a good plan," said Sun Quan. "Further, I have the man to carry it out successfully. He is that Zhou Shan, who was a bold one. He used to accompany my brother in his youth. He is the man to go."

"Keep it a secret, then," said Zhang Zhao, "and let Zhou Shan start quickly."

It was decided that Zhou Shan should take with him about five hundred soldiers disguised as ordinary traders. He had five vessels and distributed his men among them, while weapons were hidden in the holds. Travel documents were forged to look like veritable authority in case they were asked.

Zhou Shan set out along the river route for the city of Jingzhou and was not long on the way. He anchored his ships under the bank, landed, and went into the city to the residence, where he bade the doorkeepers announce him. He was admitted and led into the presence of Lady Sun and presently gave

her the secret letter. When she read that her mother was in danger of death, she began to weep bitterly and questioned the messenger closely.

Zhou Shan invented a story, saying, "The Dowager Marchioness is really fretting for a sight of you. If you do not go quickly, it will be too late. The Dowager Marchioness also wants to see little Liu Shan once before she dies."

Lady Sun replied, "You know that the Imperial Uncle is far away on military service, and I ought to inform the chief of the army before returning home."

"But what will you do if the chief says he must inform your husband and await his consent?" said Zhou Shan.

"If I went without asking permission—but I fear that is impossible."

"My ships are all ready in the river, and you have only to drive through the city," said Zhou Shan.

Naturally, the news of her mother's illness greatly disturbed the young wife. In a short time, her carriage was ready, and she mounted, taking Liu Shan with her. She took an escort of thirty guards, all armed, and was soon at the riverside and had embarked before the palace people could report what she was doing.

But just as the ships were starting, a voice was heard, shouting, "Do not start yet! Let me bid my lady farewell."

The voice was Zhao Yun's. He had just returned from an inspection trip, and they had at once told him of Lady Sun's sudden departure. As soon as he had recovered from his surprise, he dashed down to the riverbank like a whirlwind, with only half a dozen followers. He arrived only just in time: the boat was starting, and Zhou Shan stood in the prow, a long spear in his hand.

“Who are you that you dare hinder the movements of your mistress?” cried Zhou Shan.

Zhou Shan bade his soldiers cast off and get underway and also to prepare their weapons to fight. The ship moved off with a fair wind and a strong current beneath her keel.

But Zhao Yun followed along the bank.

“My lady may go or not as she pleases,” cried he, “but I have one word to say to her.”

Zhou Shan turned a deaf ear and only urged his soldiers to get greater speed on the ship. Zhao Yun followed down the bank for some three or more miles. Then, he saw a fishing boat made fast to the bank. He at once dismounted, cast off the rope, took his spear, and leaped into the boat. Then he made the two men row him toward the vessel in which sat Lady Sun.

As he approached, the soldiers of the South Land threatened him with their spears. Thereupon, he threw his spear into the bottom of the boat, drew the glittering steel blade he wore, dashed aside the opposing spears, and leaped upon the larger vessel. The guards of the South Land fell back in surprise and fear, and Zhao Yun went down into the body of the ship. There sat Lady Sun with little Liu Shan in her arms.

“Why this rude intrusion?” said she angrily.

The warrior sheathed his sword and said humbly, “Whither may my mistress be going, and why goes she privily?”

“My mother is ill and on the point of death. I had no time to inform any person of my departure,” said Lady Sun.

“But why take the young master if you are going merely to see a sick person?” said Zhao Yun.

“Liu Shan is my son, and I would not leave him behind to be neglected.”

“Mistress, you have acted wrongly. My lord has but this one son of his body, and I rescued the Child Lord from among many thousand troops of Cao Cao in the great battle at Long Slope Bridge in Dangyang. There is no reason for you to take him away.”

Lady Sun took refuge in anger. “You leave my family affairs alone, you common soldier!” cried she.

“My lady, if you will go, then go, but leave the young master behind.”

“You are a rebel, jumping on board the ship like that!” cried Lady Sun.

“If you will not leave the young lord behind, I refuse to let you go, come what may,” said Zhao Yun.

Lady Sun called in her maids to seize him, but he just pushed them off. Then he took the boy from her arms and ran out to the prow of the ship. He tried to get the vessel in to the bank, but no one would aid him, and he thought it would be wrong to begin to slay indiscriminately. He knew not what to do in such a quandary. And Lady Sun was screaming to her maids to take the boy away from him. But he kept too firm a grip on the child, and the good sword in his other hand kept everyone at bay.

Zhou Shan was at the helm, giving all his attention to getting the ship out into the current and away down the river. He steered for the middle of the stream, where the wind was strong. Zhao Yun, one hand taken up with holding the boy, was quite unable to get the vessel in toward the shore.

Just as things looked most desperate, Zhao Yun saw a string of ships filing out from a creek lower down the stream, flags fluttering and drums beating. He thought that certainly all was over and he was about to fall a victim to a stratagem of the South Land, when he noticed a mighty warrior

standing in the prow of the leading craft. He was armed with a long spear, and it was Zhang Fei.

Zhang Fei also shouted, "Sister-in-law! Leave the Child Lord."

Zhang Fei had been out scouting when he heard the news of his Sister-in-law's sudden departure, and he at once made for the River Yu with the intention of intercepting her flight. He had arrived just in the nick of time to cut off the ships of the South Land. Very soon, sword in hand, he had boarded the vessel. As Zhang Fei came on board, Zhou Shan drew his sword and advanced toward him, but one sweep of Zhang Fei's blade laid him on the deck dead. The grim warrior hung his head at the feet of Lady Sun.

"Why this very unseemly behavior?" cried Lady Sun, now quite frightened.

"Sister," said Zhang Fei, "you thought very little of my Brother when you set out on this mad journey. That was behaving rudely."

"My mother is very ill. It is a matter of life and death," cried she. "If I had waited for your Brother's permission to go, I would have been too late. If you do not let me go now, I will throw myself into the river."

Zhao Yun and Zhang Fei took counsel together. They said to each other, "It is hardly the correct thing for servants to force their lord's wife into committing suicide. Suppose we keep the child and let the vessel go."

Then, they said, "O Lady, we cannot allow the wife of our exalted Brother to die a death of shame, and so we will take our leave. We trust you will not forget our Brother and that you will return quickly."

Taking the child with them, they left the vessel, and the five ships of the South Land continued their voyage down stream.



One poet has praised the conduct of Zhao Yun:

Before, Zhao Yun saved Liu Shan,
What time his mother died;
Again like service he performs,
Upon the Great River's tide.
The soldiers of Wu all in the ship,
Were stricken down with fear
Search all the world, you never find
Of bold Zhao Yun the peer.

Another has eulogized Zhang Fei:

At Long Slope Bridge,
With rage Zhang Fei boiled,
Like wild beast roared,
And warriors recoiled.
From danger now
His prince is saved.
On history's page
His name is graved.



Quite satisfied with their success, the two warriors sailed homeward. Before they had gone far, they met Zhuge Liang with a squadron of ships. He was very pleased to find they had recovered the child, and they three joyfully

returned to Jingzhou, whence an account of the whole adventure was written to Liu Bei.

When Lady Sun reached her home, she related the story of the death of Zhou Shan and the carrying-off of the child. Naturally, Sun Quan was very wroth at the miscarriage of his scheme, and he resolved to attack Jingzhou in revenge for his messenger's murder.

“Now that my sister has returned home, there is no longer any family tie to prevent the attack, and I will take full measure of revenge for the death of my general,” said Sun Quan.

So he called the council to consider the expedition.

But before they could decide upon any plan, their deliberations were suddenly cut short by the news that Cao Cao was coming down upon the South Land with four hundred thousand troops, burning to avenge his defeat at the Red Cliffs. All thoughts now turned toward repelling his attack.

Adviser Zhang Hong, who had retired to his home ill, had just died, and his testament was sent to his lord to read. Therein, he advised Sun Quan:

“My lord, the seat of government should be removed to the old land of Moling, where the scenery seems to bear the impress of kingly dignity, befitting a person who cherishes the ambition of founding an enduring dynasty.”

Sun Quan read this document out to his councilors at this meeting, not without many tears in memory of the writer.

He told them, saying, “Zhang Hong was sincere till his death. I cannot withstand his last advice!” And Sun Quan at once gave orders to build a walled city named Shidou in Moling, and changed the name of the land to Jianye. Henceforth, he intended to make his capital there.

As a protection against Cao Cao, Admiral Lu Meng proposed building a rampart at River Ruxu.

Some other officers opposed this, saying, “When the enemy appears, you will have to land in order to attack him, and after that you will return to your ships. What is the use of a rampart?”

Lu Meng replied, “One must prepare against possibilities. Soldiers vary in keenness and sometimes lose battles. If an urgent occasion arises, the soldiers may be unable to reach the water’s edge, and how then are they to embark? They will then need shelter.”

Sun Quan said, “Provision against eventualities, such as he proposes, is good. Against a distant risk provide, and sorrow walks not by your side.”

So they sent soldiers to build ramparts at River Ruxu, and as the work ceased not day or night, the wall was soon completed.

In the capital Cao Cao’s influence and glory waxed greater daily. High Counselor Dong Zhao proposed that the title of duke should be conferred upon him.

Dong Zhao said, “In all history, no one has rendered such services as you have, O Prime Minister, not even Duke of Zhou or Lu Wang. These

thirty years, you have exposed yourself to all risks, been combed by the wind and bathed by the rain, and you have swept evil from the empire, succored the distressed, and restored the Hans. Who of all statesmen can rank with you? It would be fitting for you to become the Duke of Wei and receive the Nine Dignities, that your merit and virtue be known to all.”

Now the Nine Dignities, or signs of honor, were:

1. Chariots: Gilded chariots drawn by eight horses
2. Court dresses: Dragon-embroidered robes,
headdresses, and shoes
3. Music at banquets: By royal bands
4. Red doors: Symbols of wealth
5. Inner staircase: Protection for every step
6. Imperial Tiger Guard: Three hundred at the gates
7. Imperial axes: Commanding and ceremonial
symbols
8. Bow and arrows: Red-lacquered bow with a
hundred arrows
9. Libation vessels: Jade tablets and libation cups

However, all the courtiers were not of one mind.

Said High Adviser Xun Yu, “This should not be done, O Prime Minister. You raised a force by an appeal to the innate sense of righteousness of the people, and with that force you restored the Han authority. Now you should remain loyal and humble. The virtuous person loves people with a virtuous love and would not act in this way.”

Cao Cao did not take this opposition kindly.

Dong Zhao said, “How can we disappoint the hopes of many because of the words of one?”

So a memorial went to the Throne, and Cao Cao’s ambitions and desires were gratified with the title of Duke of Wei. The Nine Dignities were added.

“I did not think to see this day!” said Xun Yu, sighing.

This remark was repeated to the newly-created Duke and angered him. He took it to mean that Xun Yu would no longer aid him or favor his designs.

In the winter of the seventeenth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 212), Cao Cao decided to send an army to conquer the South Land, and he ordered Xun Yu to go with it. Xun Yu understood from this that Cao Cao wished his death, so he declined the appointment on the plea of illness.

While Xun Yu was at home, he received one day a box such as one sent with presents of dainties. It was addressed in Cao Cao’s own handwriting. Opening it, Xun Yu found therein nothing. He understood; so he took poison and died. He was fifty-two years of age.



Xun Yu’s talents were to all people known,
It was sad that at the door of power he tripped.
Posterity is wrong to class him with the noble Zhang
Liang,
For, nearing death, he dared not face his lord of Han.



News of Xun Yu's death came to Cao Cao in the form of the ordinary letter of mourning by his son, Xun Yun. Then Cao Cao was sorry and gave orders for an imposing funeral. He also obtained for the dead man the posthumous title of lordship.

The northern army reached River Ruxu, whence Cao Cao sent a reconnaissance of thirty thousand troops led by Cao Hong down to the river.

Soon, Cao Hong reported, "The enemy's fleet blankets the river, but no sign of movements."

Feeling suspicious, Cao Cao led his army to the river to watch the enemy and deploy his troops. On the river he saw displayed a fleet of ships all arranged in admirable order, the divisions being marked by distinctive flags. The equipment glittered in the sunlight. In the center was a large ship whereon was a huge umbrella, and beneath the shade sat Sun Quan in the midst of his staff.

"That is the sort of son to have," said Cao Cao in admiration, "not such piglets and puppies as Liu Biao's."

Suddenly, at the explosion of a bomb, the ships got underway and came flying toward him, while a force moved out of River Ruxu. Cao Cao's soldiers at once retired in great haste. A company led by the green-eyed, purple-bearded Sun Quan made straight for Cao Cao, who hastily retreated. But Cao Cao was sore-pressed by others of Sun Quan's commanders, Han Dang and Zhou Tai, and it would have gone hard for him but that Xu Chu came to his rescue and fought with the troops of the South Land till his master could escape. Xu Chu fought some score bouts before he could draw off and return to his own aid.

When Cao Cao returned to camp, he conferred rich rewards upon his henchman who had saved him, and he reprimanded his other leaders for their too-hasty retirement.

“You blunt the keen spirits of the army. And if you do such a thing again, I will put you to death,” said Cao Cao.

About midnight that night, there arose great commotion at the gates of the camp. When Cao Cao went outside, he found that the enemy had crept up secretly and started a conflagration. The soldiers of the South Land forced their way into the stockade and went hither and thither, slaying till morning broke. Then Cao Cao and his army retired.

Cao Cao was greatly distressed by this misfortune. He was sitting in his tent, poring over the Book of War, when Cheng Yu came in to see him.

“O Prime Minister,” said Cheng Yu, “you who know so thoroughly the art of war, have you forgotten the maxim to strike quickly? You had your army ready, but you postponed action and allowed your enemies to build the ramparts at River Ruxu. Now you will find it hard to capture the place. It would be better now to retreat on the capital and await a more propitious moment.”

Cao Cao listened, but said nothing. After a time, Cheng Yu went away.

Cao Cao remained seated in his tent, leaning on a small table by his side. And he fell asleep. Suddenly, he heard a sound as of a rushing stream or galloping squadrons of horses, and out of the river in front of him arose a huge red sun, so bright that his eyes were dazzled by it. Looking up at the sky, he saw two other suns as if reflections of this one. And as he wondered, the first sun suddenly flew up and then dropped among the hills in front of his camp with a roar like thunder.

This woke him. He was in his tent and had been dreaming, and the sentry at his tent door was just reporting noon.

Soon, he had his horse saddled and rode out, with a small escort of fifty riders, toward the spot he had seen in his dream. As he stood gazing around him, an army of cavalry came along, with Sun Quan at its head. Sun Quan wore a glittering helmet and was clad in silver armor.

Seeing his chief enemy, Sun Quan showed no sign of haste or dismay, but reined in his steed on a rise. Pointing with his whip at Cao Cao, he said, "Behold the all-powerful minister who holds the Middle Land in the hollow of his hand! He has reached the acme of wealth and good fortune, and yet he is not content, but must come to encroach upon our South Land."

Cao Cao replied, "You are disobedient, and the command of the Emperor is to exterminate you!"

"What words!" cried Sun Quan with a laugh. "Are you not ashamed? Everyone knows that you control every act of the Emperor and you tyrannize over the nobles. I am no rebel against the dynasty, but I do desire to capture you and reform the government."

Cao Cao grew angry at this speech and bade his generals go over and take Sun Quan prisoner. But before they could obey, Han Dang and Zhou Tai, Chen Wu and Pan Zhang, led out two armies of soldiers from left and right at the sound of beating drums, and arrows and crossbow bolts began to fall like raindrops around Cao Cao. He turned to retire, and the archers and bowmen followed him. However, presently appeared Xu Chu, with the Tiger Guards, who rescued Cao Cao and took him back to his camp. The army of the South Land had scored a victory, and they marched back to River Ruxu.

Alone in his camp, Cao Cao thought, "This Sun Quan certainly is no ordinary man, and by the presage of the sun in my dream, he will become

an emperor.”

He began to think it would be well to retire from the expedition, only that he feared the troops of the South Land would exult over him. So the two armies remained facing each other a whole month, fighting occasional skirmishes and battles in which victory fell sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other.

And so it went on till the new year, and the spring rains filled the watercourses to overflowing, and the soldiers were wading in deep mud. Their sufferings were extreme, and Cao Cao became sad at heart. At the council board, his officers were divided, some being for retirement and others anxious to hold on till the warm weather. Their chief could not make up his mind.

Then there came a messenger from the South Land bearing a letter of Sun Quan, which read:

“You and I, O Prime Minister, are both servants of Han, but you are careless for the tranquility of the people and think only of battle, thereby causing great suffering. Is this conduct worthy of a kindly person?

“But spring, with its heavy rains, is at hand, and you would be wise to retire while you can. If not, you may expect a repetition of the misfortune at the Red Cliffs. It would be well to consider this.”

And on the back of the letter was a note in a line running thus: “No tranquility for me while you live!”

Cao Cao read the letter and laughed. “Sun Quan speaks the truth!” said he.

He rewarded the messenger and issued orders to retreat. The Governor of Lujiang, Zhu Guang, was left to guard Huancheng. The army marched for the capital.

Sun Quan returned to Jianye.

At a meeting of his advisers, he said, “Cao Cao has marched north; Liu Bei is at Jiameng Pass. Why should I not lead the army that has just repulsed the northern forces to take Jingzhou?”

Thereupon, Zhang Zhao offered another plan, saying, “Do not move a soldier. I know how to keep Liu Bei from returning to Jingzhou.”

Cao Cao’s army marches away,
Sun Quan’s thoughts then southward stray.

The scheme proposed by Zhang Zhao will be unfolded in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XV

CHAPTER 62

THE TAKING OF RIVER FU PASS: YANG HUAI AND GAO PEI PERISH; THE
SIEGE OF LUOCHENG: HUANG ZHONG AND WEI YAN RIVAL.

Zhang Zhao proceeded to unfold his device: "If you undertake any expedition farther west, Cao Cao will undoubtedly return to the attack. Rather, write two letters, one to Liu Zhang saying that Liu Bei has leagued himself with you against the west, which will raise suspicions in the mind of Liu Zhang and cause him to attack his guest, and another letter persuading Zhang Lu to march upon Jingzhou, which will uproot Liu Bei. Between these two conflicting matters, Liu Bei cannot give supports to all fronts, and we can march against Jingzhou."

Sun Quan approved, wrote the two letters, and sent them by two messengers.

In the meantime, Liu Bei had been winning the hearts of the people about Jiameng Pass, where his army lay. When he received the news of his wife's flight and of Cao Cao's attack on Ruxu, he called in Pang Tong and laid the matter before him.

"The victor of Ruxu, whoever it is, will assuredly possess himself of our region of Jingzhou," said Liu Bei at the close.

"You need not trouble about that region," said Pang Tong. "I do not think the South Land or the Middle Land will try to take it so long as Zhuge

Liang is there. But, my lord, write to Liu Zhang telling him you wish to return on account of this threatening danger. It will be a plausible excuse. You may say that on account of Cao Cao's attack, Sun Quan has sent to you for help, and that as his country and yours are neighbors and dependent upon each other for safety you cannot refuse. Further, you will assure him that there is no danger of any invasion by Zhang Lu. However, we have too few troops for our purpose and insufficient grain, so you must also urge your relative to send you thirty or forty thousand of veterans and a plentiful supply of food. He will not refuse, and with more soldiers and provisions we can do as we please."

Liu Bei agreed to this and sent a messenger to Chengdu. When his messenger reached the River Fu Pass, Yang Huai and Gao Pei, who commanded the garrison, already knew of the design, and the former of the two generals went with him to the city.

After reading the letter, the Imperial Protector asked Yang Huai, "Why did you come with the messenger?"

"Only because of that letter," Yang Huai replied. "This Liu Bei, from the day he first entered Yizhou, has been trying to win over the hearts of your people by a display of kindness and virtue. He certainly intends no good, and I think you should refuse both the troops and the supplies he asks. To help him is like adding fuel to a fire."

"We are affectionate brothers, and I must help him," said the Imperial Protector.

"Liu Bei is nothing but a vagabond swashbuckler," someone cried, "and if you keep him here in the west, you are loosing a tiger in your household. If you give him the troops and supplies he asks, you are adding wings to your tiger."

Turning whence the voice proceeded, they recognized the speaker as one Liu Ba, a native of Lingling. His words threw the Imperial Protector into a state of doubt and hesitation. Huang Quan also dissuaded him most earnestly, and finally Liu Zhang actually decided to send only four thousand worn-out soldiers and a paltry supply of grain. At the same time, fresh orders enjoining a diligent watchfulness were sent to the guardians of the passes.

When Liu Bei read the letter that accompanied the Imperial Protector's miserable contribution to his strength, he was furious and cried, "I have been spending myself in your defense, and this is my reward! You are mean and greedy enough to stint my supplies. How can you expect generous service?"

Liu Bei tore the letter to fragments and execrated the writer thereof. The bearer of the letter fled back to the capital.

Then said Pang Tong, "You have hitherto laid too much stress on humanity and righteousness. However, that is all over now, and all affection between you two is at an end, now that you have torn up that letter."

"Yes. And since that is so, what next?" asked Liu Bei.

"I have three schemes ready in my mind. You may choose which pleases you."

"What are your three schemes?"

"The first, and best, is to send an army forthwith and seize Chengdu. The second is to capture and put to death the two generals of the River Fu Pass. They are the two most famous fighting men in this land. If you give out that you are returning to Jingzhou, they will assuredly come to say

farewell. Seize and put them to death, and the Pass and Fucheng are both yours. Chengdu will follow soon. The third plan is to drop this role you have been playing, go back to Jingzhou and make a regular invasion. But if you ponder these schemes too long, you will get into such straits so that nothing can save you.”

Liu Bei replied, “Of your three schemes, O Instructor, I find the first too summary and the last too slow. I choose the second scheme, which is neither.”

So a letter was written to Liu Zhang saying that Cao Cao was sending an army against Qingni and since the generals there were unequal to the defense, Liu Bei had to go to help. As the matter was pressing, there could be no personal leave-taking.

“I knew that the real desire of Liu Bei was to return to Jingzhou,” said Zhang Song, when he heard of the letter to Liu Zhang.

Zhang Song then also composed a letter to Liu Bei. While he was looking about for a trusty person to take it, his brother Zhang Su, who was the Governor of Guanghan, came to see him. Zhang Song hid the letter in his sleeve while he talked with his brother. Zhang Su noticed his anxious inquietude, which he could not explain. Wine was brought in and, as the two brothers chatted over it, the letter dropped to the floor unnoticed by Zhang Song. One of Zhang Su’s servants saw it, picked it up, and gave it to his master, who opened and read it.

This is about how it ran:

“What I said to you lately was not mere meaningless talk. Why, then, postpone action? The ancients valued the person who took by force and held by conciliation. If you act at once, the whole matter is in your hand. Why abandon all and return to Jingzhou? Surely I do not

hear aright! When you get this letter, attack without a moment's delay and remember that I am your ally on the inside. Above all, no delay!"

"This plot of my brother's will end in the destruction of the whole family," said Zhang Su. "I must get in the first word." So at once he went in and laid the whole matter before the Imperial Protector.

"I have always treated your brother so well!" said Liu Zhang, very angry.

Liu Zhang issued orders to arrest Zhang Song and behead him and all his household in the marketplace.



Zhang Song, such as he have been but few,
Little thought he that a letter would betray
When he plotted for another. But success he never
knew,
For himself there opened out a gory way.



Having thus learned of a real conspiracy to deprive him of his heritage, Liu Zhang assembled his officers and asked their advice.

Huang Quan spoke out, saying, "Prompt action is needed. Send to every strategic point telling them to increase the garrisons and keep careful guard and, above all, prevent the entrance of any person from Jingzhou."

Such orders were sent to all points of vantage where were garrisons.

In the meantime, carrying out Pang Tong's scheme, Liu Bei had marched down to Fucheng, where he halted and sent in a messenger to invite the two generals to come forth and say farewell. But they did not respond immediately to this invitation.

"What is the real meaning of this retirement?" said one to the other.

"This Liu Bei ought to die," said Gao Pei. "Let us hide daggers under our dress and stab him at the place of farewell. That will end all our lord's troubles."

"A most excellent plan," said Yang Huai.

So they two, taking only a small escort of two hundred, went down out of the Pass to say goodbye. Most of their forces were left in the camp.

On the way down to River Fu, Pang Tong had said to his master, "You have need to be on your guard against those two if they come to bid you farewell. If they do not come, then the Pass must be attacked without delay."

Just as he said this, a violent gust of wind overthrew the leading flag of the army, and Liu Bei asked what this portended.

"That means a surprise. Those two intend to assassinate you, so be on your guard."

Accordingly, Liu Bei put on double armor and girded on his sword in readiness. When the two generals arrived, the army halted for the generals' farewell visit.

Then, Pang Tong said to his two generals, Wei Yan and Huang Zhong, "However many soldiers come down from the Pass, see to it that none return."

The two generals of the West River Land, Yang Huai and Gao Pei, armed with hidden daggers, came up, their escort bearing gifts of sheep and

wine. They marked no precautions being taken against an attack and began to think their task of murder would be an easy one. They were led into where Liu Bei sat under a tent, his adviser with him.

They said, "We hear, O Imperial Uncle, that you contemplate a long march, and therefore we come to offer a few poor gifts to speed you on your way."

The cups of farewell were duly filled.

Then Liu Bei replied, "You have a heavy responsibility to defend the Pass, Generals. I pray you drink first." They drank. Then Liu Bei said, "I have a secret matter to talk over with you."

So all two hundred soldiers of the escort were sent away and led to the midst of the camp.

As soon as they had gone, Liu Bei shouted, "My generals, lay hands upon these two rebels!"

Thereupon, Liu Feng and Guan Ping rushed out from behind the tent. The two generals of the Pass were taken aback but began to struggle. However, Liu Feng and Guan Ping each seized one man and held him.

"Your lord and I are of the same house," said Liu Bei. "Why then have you plotted against me and conspired to sow enmity between us?"

Pang Tong bade them search the captives, and the hidden daggers were found. So both were ordered to immediate execution. However, Liu Bei hesitated and was unwilling to confirm the sentence and put them to death. But his adviser insisted that they were worthy of death for the assassination they had penned, and bade the executioners fall on. So the two men were beheaded. Of their following, not one had been allowed to slip away.

Liu Bei summoned the soldiers of the escort to his tent, gave them wine to comfort them, and said, "Your leaders conspired to sow dissension

between brothers and were found with daggers hidden beneath their clothing. They were assassins in intent and have met the fate they merited. You have committed no crime and need feel no alarm.”

The soldiers thanked him for his clemency with low obeisance.

Then, said Pang Tong, “If you will now show the way so that our troops may capture the Pass, you shall even be rewarded.”

They consented. That same night, the army set out, with the soldiers of the renegade escort leading the way.

When they reached the Pass they hailed the gate, saying, “Open the gate quickly! The Generals have returned earlier than they expected because of important business.”

Hearing the voices of their comrades, the gate guards had no suspicion of treachery and threw open the gates. In rushed the enemy soldiers and so gained possession of River Fu Pass without shedding a drop of blood. The defenders came over to the side of Liu Bei and were liberally rewarded. This done, the army was posted so as to guard the approaches and maintain what they had captured.

The next few days were spent in banquets and feasts in celebration of success.

At one of these feasts, Liu Bei turned to his adviser, saying, “This is what one might call a joyful occasion.”

“To employ warlike weapons in making an attack upon the possession of another is not using them in the best way,” replied Pang Tong. “Nor is such an attack the most proper occasion for rejoicing.”

Liu Bei replied, "The success of King Wu of Zhou was celebrated with music. I suppose weapons were not well used on that occasion either. Why do you talk so wide of reason? You had better retire."

Pang Tong laughed and withdrew from the table, while the attendants supported Liu Bei to his own chamber, where he had a long sleep. About midnight, he awoke from his wine, and then the servants told him that he had driven sway his adviser from the feast. He was at once filled with remorse.

Next day, having dressed early in full costume of ceremony, he took his seat in the great hall, summoned his adviser and apologized handsomely for his rude behavior the night before.

"I drank too much last night and spoke rudely. Pray forgive me."

Pang Tong, who had taken the whole episode in very good part from the first, laughed and talked as usual.

But Liu Bei went on, "Really, I was the only one to blame yesterday."

"We both slipped up. It was not only you, my lord," said Pang Tong.

Then Liu Bei laughed too, and the two were as good friends again as ever.

When Imperial Protector Liu Zhang heard of the doings of his relative and guest, he said, "I did not think that such things would come to pass."

The officers of Yizhou met to consider how to oppose the further advance of Liu Bei.

Huang Quan said, "Let us send without delay a force to hold Luocheng, which is the very throat of the road he must take. He may have

veteran soldiers and fiery generals, but he will not be able to pass.”

So the four ablest generals—Deng Xian, Ling Bao, Liu Gui, and Zhang Ren—were told off for this duty, and they led fifty thousand troops.

As they marched, Liu Gui said, “In the Silky Hills, there is a wonderful Daoist who calls himself ‘The Super Human of the Dark Void.’ He has the gift of second sight, so let us visit him as we pass and inquire what our fortunes are to be.”

“What should one seek of a hermit when one is out to repulse an enemy?” said his colleague, Zhang Ren, contemptuously.

“Your view is wrong,” said Liu Gui. “The Holy One, Confucius, has said that it is characteristic of the most complete sincerity to be able to foreknow. So let us inquire of this man of high intelligence that we may know what to do and what to avoid.”

Whereupon, they went up into the hills and sought the hermit’s retreat. They were a small party, on horseback. Meeting a woodcutter, they inquired as to the whereabouts of the dwelling of the wise man, and he pointed to one of the highest hills, saying that the Sage lived on the very summit. They climbed up to the spot he had told them of and found a small hut. At their summons, a lad in Daoist garb came out to speak with them. He asked their names and led them into the presence of the Super Human, who received them seated on a rush cushion. They made a low obeisance, told him the reason of their coming, and asked of the future.

“How can a poor Daoist recluse know ought of fortunes, good or evil?” said he.

However, after a time, as Liu Gui repeated his request again and again and comported himself most humbly, the hermit bade the lad bring paper and ink, and he wrote eight lines, which he handed to his questioner.

“Supported by dragon and phoenix,
So flies he westward.
But the phoenix shall fall to the earth.
And the dragon shall soar to the sky;
There shall be successes and failures,
For such is the eternal law.
See that ye act when occasion offers,
Lest ye descend to the Nine Golden Springs.”

Having read the oracle, they pressed the seer to reveal them their individual fortunes, but he replied, “Why ask these things? None can escape his fate.”

Liu Gui ventured to question the Sage further, but his eyelids dropped as if he slumbered. Nor would he vouchsafe a word more, and the four generals took leave and descended the hill.

“One must have faith in such as he says,” said Liu Gui.

“What is to be gained by listening to the sayings of a daft old man?” replied Zhang Ren.

So they continued their road to Luocheng.

When they arrived, Liu Gui said, “Luocheng is the throat of the road to Chengdu. We must create a pincer defense for the city. Two of us are to guard the ramparts while the other two are to station themselves in front of the city, where is a point of vantage sheltered by some hills.”

Thus, Deng Xian and Ling Bao wanted to build the ramparts outside the city. Twenty thousand troops were told off. The two generals went to establish two camps in two stockades twenty miles away, hoping to be able to keep the foe away from the city.

The River Fu Pass being captured, Liu Bei took counsel with his adviser as to the next point to be attempted. This was Luo Cheng.

The scouts reported: "Liu Zhang has sent four generals to the defense of that city, and two camps have been established twenty miles away to form an ox-horn."

Then, Liu Bei assembled his officers and asked who would go to attack the camps. The veteran Huang Zhong offered himself.

"Veteran General, take your own troops and go," said Liu Bei. "A goodly reward shall be yours if you capture the two camps."

Huang Zhong thanked his lord and was just leading away his troops when suddenly up spoke a youthful leader, saying, "The General is too old to go on such an expedition. I am of poor ability, but I wish to take his place." The speaker was Wei Yan.

Huang Zhong replied, "I already have my commission. Why should you wish to supplant me?"

"Because the task is beyond an old man's strength," said Wei Yan. "The two generals in those camps we know are the best and boldest in the country. They are strong, and, veteran as you are, I fear you will be unable to overcome them. If you fail, our lord's great design will be hindered. Therefore, I ask that I may replace you, and my intent is kindly."

This reminder of his age angered the old man. "Old, am I? Dare you compete with me in the use of warlike weapons?" said Huang Zhong.

"Yes, I dare. And our lord shall be the judge. The winner shall undertake this expedition. Do you agree?"

Huang Zhong ran down the steps and called to his soldiers to bring his sword.

But Liu Bei would stop this contest and said, "I have need of both of you in the task that lies before me. When two tigers fight, one is sure to lose, and the loss of either of you is more than I could bear. Be reconciled and quarrel no more."

"You two must not quarrel," said Pang Tong. "But as there are two camps to be taken and two generals to fight, take one each and let each lead his own troops. The first to capture his camp shall be held to have rendered the greater service and to have acquired the greater merit."

This decision pacified them, and it was settled that Huang Zhong, the Veteran, should go against Ling Bao, and Wei Yan, the younger leader, should attack Deng Xian.

But after they had marched away, Pang Tong recommended, "You, my lord, should follow them lest they should quarrel on the way."

So leaving the city of Fucheng in care of his adviser, Liu Bei also marched, taking with him Liu Feng, his adopted son, and Guan Ping, his nephew by adoption. They took five thousand troops.

After having received the command to take one of the camps, Huang Zhong went to his own camp and issued orders for the morning meal to be ready very early and for everyone to be in marching order by daybreak. When the time arrived, his army set out, taking the road through a gully to the left of the hills.

But early as Huang Zhong started, his rival had stolen a march on him. Wei Yan had sent over the night before to find out the hour fixed for Huang Zhong's start and had arranged his own departure a watch earlier, by which he would be able to reach his objective at dawn. After Wei Yan's troops had

taken their early meal, they removed the bells from the horses' ends and put gags in their own mouths to prevent talking, and all-silently, the army stole out of the camp just as the other party were eating their breakfast. The ensigns were furled and weapons covered lest the glint of steel should betray their movement.

Thus far successful in getting the start of his rival, Wei Yan thought as he rode along what a fine score he would make if he anticipated Huang Zhong also in his attack and captured the camp of Ling Bao before Huang Zhong could get there. Wei Yan at once deviated from his own line and marched toward the camp defended by Ling Bao, of which the capture had been assigned to Huang Zhong.

Just before arrival, Wei Yan halted his troops and bade them prepare the drums and ensigns and their weapons.

Early as it was, the camp commander was yet on the alert, for the advancing force had been observed by his scouts. At the first sign of attack, the defenders poured out in full force. Wei Yan galloped up and made straight for Ling Bao. These two fought twenty or so bouts, and then the troops of the West River Land came up and joined in the battle. The troops of Jingzhou under Wei Yan, having marched a long distance, were fatigued and could not withstand this onslaught, so they fell back. Wei Yan heard the confused sound of hoofs behind him and, giving up all thought of finishing his encounter with Ling Bao, turned his horse and fled. The troops of the West River Land kept up the pursuit, and the attackers were defeated and retired.

They had gone about two miles when another army of Yizhou appeared from behind some hills. They advanced with beating drums. Their leader, Deng Xian, shouted to Wei Yan to surrender, but Wei Yan heeded him not; whipping up his steed, he fled the faster. However, the tired horse

tripped and fell on its knees, throwing its rider to the ground. Deng Xian's forces came galloping up, and he himself set his spear to thrust and slay Wei Yan. Before the spear could get where it was supposed to be, twang! went a bowstring, and Deng Xian lay prone upon the earth.

Ling Bao, Deng Xian's colleague, rode up quickly to his rescue, but just then, a body of horsemen came dashing down the hill, and their leader shouted, "General Huang Zhong is here!"

With uplifted sword, Huang Zhong rode toward Ling Bao, who turned his steed and galloped off to the rear. Huang Zhong pursued, and the army of Yizhou was thrown into confusion. So Huang Zhong was able to rescue his colleague, Wei Yan; Huang Zhong had thus slain Deng Xian and forced his way up to the gate of the camp.

Once again, Ling Bao came and engaged Huang Zhong. The two had fought some ten bouts when appeared another body of soldiers. Thereupon, Ling Bao fled again, and this time he made for the other camp, abandoning his own to the troops of Jingzhou.

But when he drew near his camp, he saw no longer the familiar flags of his own side. Instead, alien banners fluttered in the breeze. He checked his steed and stared at the new force. The leader was a general wearing a silver breastplate and clad in a silken robe, no other than Liu Bei himself. On his left was his son, and on his right rode his nephew.

"Whither would you come?" cried Liu Bei. "The camp is ours. I have captured it."

Now Liu Bei had led his troops in the tracks of the other two armies, ready to help either in case of need. He had come across the empty and undefended camp and taken possession.

Left with no place of refuge, Ling Bao set off along a byway to try to get back to Luocheng. He had not gone far when he fell into an ambush and was taken prisoner. Bound with cords, he was taken to the camp of Liu Bei.

The ambush had been prepared by Wei Yan, who, knowing he had committed a fault, had collected as many of his soldiers as he could find and made some of the captured soldiers of Yizhou guide him to a spot suitable for laying an ambush.

Liu Bei had hoisted the flag of amnesty for his enemies, and whenever any soldier of the West River Land laid down his weapons and stripped off his armor, he was spared. Also, all the wounded were granted life.

Liu Bei told his enemies that they had liberty of choice. He said, "You soldiers have parents and wives and little ones at home, and those who wish to return to them are free to go. If any wish to join my army, they also will be received."

At this proof of generosity, the sound of rejoicing filled the land.

Having made his camp, Huang Zhong came to Liu Bei and said, "Wei Yan should be put to death for disobedience!"

The culprit was summoned and came, bringing with him his prisoner. Liu Bei decided that the merit of capturing an enemy should be set against his fault and bade him thank his rescuer, enjoining upon them both to quarrel no more. Wei Yan bowed his head and confessed his fault, and Huang Zhong was handsomely rewarded.

The prisoner was then taken before Liu Bei to decide upon his fate. Liu Bei loosened Ling Bao's bonds by his own hands and gave him the cup of consolation. After he had drunk, Liu Bei asked if he was willing to surrender.

“Since you give me my life, I can do no other,” said he. “Moreover, my two companions, Liu Gui and Zhang Ren, and I are sworn to live or die together. If you will release me, I will return and bring them also to you, and therewith, you will get possession of Luocheng.”

Liu Bei gladly accepted the offer. He gave Ling Bao clothing and a horse and bade him go to the city to carry out his plan.

“Do not let him go,” said Wei Yan. “If you do, you will never see him again.”

Liu Bei replied, “If I treat humans with kindness and justice, they will not betray my trust.”

So the prisoner was set free.

When Ling Bao reached the city and saw his two friends, he told them, saying, “I slew many of the enemy and escaped by mounting the steed of one of them.”

Ling Bao said no word of having been captured. Messengers were sent in haste to Chengdu for help.

The loss of his general Deng Xian disturbed the Imperial Protector greatly. He called his advisers together to consult.

Then his eldest son, Liu Xun, said, “Father, let me go to defend Luocheng.”

“You may go, my son, but who is there to go with you?”

One Wu Yi at once offered himself. He was brother-in-law to Liu Zhang.

Liu Zhang said, "It is well that you go, brother-in-law, but who will second you?"

Wu Yi at once recommended two men, Wu Lan and Lei Tong, who were appointed to assist in the command. Twenty thousand troops were given them, and they set out for Luocheng. Liu Gui and Zhang Ren came out to welcome them and told them what had happened.

Wu Yi said, "If the enemy draws near to the walls, it will be hard to drive them off again. What do you two think should be done?"

Ling Bao replied, "The city lies along River Fu, and the current is strong. The enemy camp lies low at the foot of the hills. With five thousand people, I can cut the riverbanks, flood their camp, and drown Liu Bei and his army with him."

The plan was approved, and Ling Bao went away to carry it out. Wu Lan and Lei Tong were told off to supervise the workers. They began to prepare the tools for cutting the bank.

Leaving Huang Zhong and Wei Yan in command of the two camps, Liu Bei went away to Fucheng to consult with Pang Tong, the army's instructor. Intelligence had been received that Sun Quan had sent a messenger to seek to make a league with Zhang Lu to make a joint attack upon the Jiameng Pass, and Liu Bei was alarmed, lest it should come to pass.

"If they do that, I am taken in the rear and helpless in both advance and retreat," said he. "What do you counsel, O Instructor?"

Pang Tong turned to Meng Da, saying, "You are a native of Shu and well-learned in its topography. What can be done to make the Pass secure?"

“Let me take a certain man with me, and I will defend it myself and answer for its safety.”

“Who is he?” asked Liu Bei.

“He was formerly an officer under Liu Biao. His name is Huo Jun, and he is a native of Nanjun in the south.”

This offer was accepted, and the two generals departed.

After the council, when Pang Tong returned to his lodging, the doorkeeper told him that a visitor had arrived. When Pang Tong went out to receive him, he saw a huge, tall fellow, eight cubits in stature and of noble countenance. His hair had been cut short and hung upon his neck. He was poorly dressed.

“Who may you be, Master?” asked Pang Tong.

The visitor made no reply, but went at once straight up the room and lay upon the couch. Pang Tong felt very suspicious of the man and repeated his question.

Pressed again, the visitor said, “Do let me rest a little. Then I will talk with you about everything in the world.”

This answer only added to the mystery and increased the host’s suspicion, but he had wine and food brought in, of which the guest partook ravenously. Having eaten, he lay down and fell asleep.

Pang Tong was greatly puzzled and thought the man must be a spy. He sent for Fa Zheng, met him in the courtyard, and told him about the strange visitor.

“Surely, it can be no other than Peng Yang,” said Fa Zheng.

Fa Zheng went inside and looked.

Immediately, the visitor jumped up, saying, “I hope you have been well since we parted last!”

Because two old friends meet again,
A river’s fatal flood is checked.

The next chapter will explain who the stranger was.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XV

CHAPTER 63

ZHUGE LIANG MOURNS FOR PANG TONG; ZHANG FEI RELEASES YAN
YAN.

Fa Zheng and the newcomer met with every sign of joy, clapping their hands and laughing with pleasure.

“This is Peng Yang of Guanghan, one of our heroes. His blunt speech, however, offended Imperial Protector Liu Zhang, who put him to shame by shaving his head, loading him with fetters, and forcing him into a monastery. That is why his hair is short.”

The introduction made, Pang Tong treated the stranger with all the courtesy due to a guest and asked why he had come.

“To save a myriad of your soldiers’ lives. I will explain fully when I see General Liu Bei.”

A message was sent to Liu Bei, who came over to see the visitor.

“How many troops have you, General?” asked Peng Yang, when Liu Bei arrived.

Liu Bei told him.

“As a leader, you cannot be ignorant of the lie of the land. Your camps over there are on River Fu. If the river were to be diverted and the enemy to hold your army in front and rear, not a soul could escape.”

Liu Bei realized that this was true.

Peng Yang continued, “In the heaven, the bowl of the Dipper lies toward the west, and Venus stands over against us. The aspect is ominous of

evil, and some misfortune threatens. It must be warded off.”

Liu Bei offered Peng Yang an appointment as an adviser. Then he sent messages to the generals at the camps telling them to keep most vigilant lookout to guard against the cutting of the riverbank. When this message came, Huang Zhong and Wei Yan agreed together to take duty day and night and maintain the strict watch necessary in the presence of an enemy near at hand. They arranged means of communication in case either met with a body of the enemy.

One very stormy night, Ling Bao ventured out with a strong party of five thousand and went along the riverbank to seek a suitable place for the breach. But a sudden shouting in his rear told him that the army of Jingzhou was on the alert, and he at once retired. Wei Yan came in pursuit and, as he pressed nearer, Ling Bao's troops hurried forward, trampling each other down in their haste. Suddenly, Ling Bao and Wei Yan ran against each other, and they engaged. The fight was very short, for Wei Yan soon took his opponent prisoner. Wu Lan and Lei Tong, who came to Ling Bao's rescue, were easily beaten off, and Ling Bao was carried away.

When Wei Yan reached the Pass, Liu Bei saw Ling Bao and greatly blamed him for his base ingratitude. “I treated you generously and set you free, yet you repaid me with ingratitude. I cannot forgive again.”

So the prisoner was beheaded, and his captor was rewarded. A banquet was given in honor of Peng Yang.

Soon after this came a letter from Zhuge Liang, by the hand of Ma Liang, who reported all calm in Jingzhou and told Liu Bei that he need feel no anxiety. Opening the letter, Liu Bei read:

“I have been making some astrological calculations. This is the last year of the cycle; the bowl of the Dipper is in the western quarter, and the planet Venus approaches Luocheng. The configuration is inimical to leaders, and the utmost caution is necessary.”

Having read this and sent Ma Liang away, Liu Bei said, “I will return myself to Jingzhou and discuss the matter.”

But Pang Tong opposed this, for he thought in his heart that Zhuge Liang’s warning was due to a jealous desire to prevent him from winning the glory of conducting a victorious campaign in the West River Land.

Therefore, Pang Tong said, “I also have made calculations, and I read the signs to mean that the time is favorable for you to get possession of this land, and no evil is foreshown. Therefore, be not of doubtful heart, my lord, but advance boldly.”

Liu Bei was won over and decided to follow Pang Tong’s advice. He ordered Huang Zhong and Wei Yan to lead.

Pang Tong asked of Fa Zheng what roads there were to follow, and the latter drew a map, which was found to agree exactly with that left by Zhang Song.

Fa Zheng said, “North of the mountains is a high road leading to the east gate. South of the mountains is another path leading to the west gate. Both of these roads are suitable for the advance of an army.”

So Pang Tong said to Liu Bei, “With Wei Yan to lead the way, I will go along the southern road, while you, my lord, will advance along the high road, with Huang Zhong in the van. We will attack Luocheng at the same time.”

Liu Bei replied, “I was trained as a mounted archer and am accustomed to byroads; wherefore, O Instructor, I think you should take the

high road and let me take the other.”

“There will be opposition on the high road, and you are the best to deal with it. Let me take the byroad.”

“No, this does not suit me,” replied Liu Bei. “A spirit bearing a massive, iron club appeared to me in a dream and struck my right arm, so that I suffered great pain. I feel sure this expedition will turn out badly.”

Pang Tong replied, “When a soldier goes into battle, he may be killed or he may be wounded. He accepts whichever is his fate. But should one hesitate because of a dream?”

“The real reason of my hesitation is the letter from Zhuge Liang. Wherefore, I wish you to remain and guard River Fu Pass. Do you agree to that?”

Pang Tong smiled, saying, “Zhuge Liang has indeed filled your mind with doubts. The real thing is that he is unwilling to let me have the merit of accomplishing a great undertaking alone. That is why he has written this. And your doubts and hesitations have produced the dream. But I see nothing ill-omened, and I am prepared for any sacrifice and mean just what I say. Pray, my lord, say no more, but prepare to set forth.”

So the order went forth that the morning meal was to be taken early and the army was to march at dawn. Huang Zhong and Wei Yan were to take the lead, one along each road. These two set out first, and in due time, Liu Bei and Pang Tong mounted and followed.

Suddenly, Pang Tong’s horse shied and stumbled, throwing him off.

Liu Bei jumped down and seized the horse by the bridle, saying, “Why do you ride this wretched beast?”

“I have ridden him a long time, and he has never done this before,” was the reply.

“A shying steed risks a person’s life,” said Liu Bei. “Ride my horse, which is thoroughly trained and will never fail you. Give me yours.”

They exchanged horses.

“I am deeply affected by your kindness,” said Pang Tong. “I could never repay you if I suffered death a thousand times.”

Soon, their ways diverged. After his adviser left, Liu Bei felt ill at ease and rode gloomily.

When the news of Ling Bao’s capture and death reached Luocheng, Wu Yi and Liu Gui took counsel together.

Their colleague, Zhang Ren, said, “I know a byroad on the southeast which is of great importance, and I pray you let me guard it while you two hold the city.”

So as soon as the news of the advancing armies came, Zhang Ren led three thousand troops to this byroad and placed them in ambush. They remained hidden while Wei Yan passed and made no attack. The main body under Pang Tong soon followed.

The soldiers in ambush saw a rider on a fine white horse and pointed him out to one another, saying, “That surely is Liu Bei on the white horse!”

Their leader, Zhang Ren, rejoiced too, and he gave certain orders.

Pang Tong hastened forward. By and by, the mountain road narrowed to a defile with dense thickets on either hand, and as the season was when summer changes into autumn, the foliage was thick and impenetrable. His

heart alarmed him, and presently, he reined in his steed and asked if any knew the name of that place.

One of the soldiers of Yizhou who had joined his army said, "This is called 'The Fallen Phoenix Slope.'"

Pang Tong shuddered. "An evil omen for me, since Young Phoenix is my Daoist name. There is no luck for me here!"

He decided to retire. But as he gave the order, the roar of a bomb rent the air, and arrows began to fly toward him, thick as swarming locusts. All the hidden men were shooting at the rider of the white horse. And there, wounded by many arrows, poor Pang Tong died at the age of thirty-six.



A poem says:

Deep in the blue recesses of Xian Hills
Lay hid the modest cot of Pang Tong.
But now each village urchin knows his story,
And any village rustic tells his exploits.
He knew the empire must be triply rent,
And far he traveled lonely, to and fro.
None knew that Heaven would cast down his star,
Forbidding his return in glory clad.

A song was also written referring to Pang Tong:

They were two, the Phoenix and the Dragon,
And they would travel far to the west;
But on the road thither

The Phoenix died on the mountain slope.
The wind drives off the rain,
The rain sends off the wind.
It was the day of the Han restoration,
When the west was attained,
But in the attainment
The Dragon was alone.



Not only was the leader of the expedition slain, but more than half of his soldiers fell in the narrow road that fatal day. Some of the troops in the van escaped and ran off to tell Wei Yan of the mishap to the army, and he halted and turned back to help. However, it was difficult to march back, and he could not hack a way through, for the road was held by Zhang Ren, and archers and crossbowmen occupied all the heights.

Then, one of the renegades proposed that they should try to return along the high road, and they started for Luocheng this way. But in front of them arose a great cloud of dust, betraying the approach of an enemy. Wu Lan and Lei Tong, the defenders of the city, were moving toward them, and Wei Yan was between the two armies, closed in like the kernel of a nut.

Wei Yan fought hard to get through. When his case seemed most desperate and hopeless, he observed signs of confusion in the army that lay between him and the city. Soon that army turned and faced the other way. He pressed forward and presently saw troops of his own side, led by the Veteran Huang Zhong.

“I will rescue you, Wei Yan!” shouted Huang Zhong, as he came near.

Now, the defenders of Luocheng found themselves between two enemies, and they were smitten heavily. They could not check Wei Yan and Huang Zhong, who got close to the very walls of Luocheng. Seeing them near, Liu Gui, who had been left to defend the city, poured out against them. Thereupon, Huang Zhong and Wei Yan, in spite of the nearness of the army of Liu Bei, refused battle and turned sway from the city.

Liu Bei's army made a dash for two stockades, but when Zhang Ren came along the byroad, and the other three defenders of the city came on, the stockades could not be held, and Liu Bei's army had to retire. Now fighting and now marching, the army of Liu Bei strove hard to reach River Fu Pass, but Zhang Ren pressed close. However, Liu Feng and Guan Ping came up, and not only drove back the pursuers but chased them some seven miles. Finally, Liu Bei and his troops reached the Pass, weary and dispirited. His son and nephew returned from the pursuit with many horses they had captured from the flying enemy. However, nothing had been gained and the victory lay rather with the army of the West River Land.

Liu Bei sent to inquire about Pang Tong. One of the fugitives from the army finally reached River Fu Pass and told Liu Bei of the sad news: man and horse wounded to death. Liu Bei turned his face to the west and mourned bitterly.

Although the body of the slain leader lay far away, they instituted sacrifice to call the spirit, and all the generals keened for him.

Then, said Huang Zhong, "Now that our leader is no more, certainly the enemy will return to attack the Pass. What is to be done? I think we had better send to Jingzhou for Zhuge Liang and get him to lay plans for getting possession of the West River Land."

And even then, came in one to say that the enemy under Zhang Ren had come and were now offering a challenge at the rampart.

Huang Zhong and Wei Yan wished to go forth to fight, but Liu Bei disapproved, saying, "We have suffered a severe check, and the soldiers are low-spirited. Let us rather remain on the defensive until the Directing Instructor can arrive."

Huang Zhong and Wei Yan made no objection, but set themselves to guard the Pass most vigilantly, while a letter was written to Zhuge Liang and sent by the hand of Guan Ping. He set forth at once, and Liu Bei gave himself up to holding the Pass.

In Jingzhou, it was the seventh day of the seventh moon, and in the evening, Zhuge Liang invited his officers to a banquet. Conversation turned toward the enterprise in the West River Land. Suddenly, a large and brilliant meteor appeared falling in the west, illuminating the whole sky. It so disturbed the host that he dashed his wine cup to the ground, covered his face, and burst into tears.

"Alas! Alas!"

The guests eagerly asked him why he wept.

Zhuce Liang replied, "I knew by my calculations that the bowl of the Dipper would be in the west at this season and that the auspices would be unfavorable to leaders of armies, and lo! the Heavens have gone against our army. When Venus was about to stand over Luocheng, I wrote to our lord warning him to be very cautious. I never contemplated the falling of the star this evening. Now Pang Tong is no more." Again he fell to weeping. "My lord has lost an arm!" moaned he.

The guests were rather disturbed, but they only half-believed that such a misfortune had happened.

“We shall hear the sad news in a very few days,” said Zhuge Liang.

The banquet ended sadly enough, and the guests went their ways.

A few days later, while Zhuge Liang was sitting with Guan Yu and a few others, they reported the arrival of Guan Ping with letters from the west. When the letters were opened, they knew that Pang Tong had fallen the same evening that the meteor had appeared.

Zhuce Liang wailed, and the others wept with him.

Then, Zhuge Liang said, “I must go to help our lord. He is hemmed in at the Pass and cannot move.”

“If you go away, who will guard this region?” asked Guan Yu. “It is of very great importance.”

“Our lord has not written plainly, but I know what was in his mind.” Then he showed the letter to the others and said, “Provision for the defense of this region is laid upon me, and I am to find one equal to the task. I read the letter to mean that he desires Guan Yu to undertake the defense, and I know that Guan Yu will do it for the sake of the pledge taken long ago in the Peach Garden. The task is no light one.”

Guan Yu accepted without hesitation or thought of excuse. A special banquet was prepared at which the seal was to be handed over to him.

“All the future rests with you, General,” said Zhuge Liang as he raised the symbol of office to place it in the hands of the leader.

“When a person of honor accepts such a task, he is only released by death,” replied Guan Yu.

But that ill-omened word, “death,” displeased Zhuge Liang, and even then he would have retracted but that Guan Yu’s word had gone forth. Zhuge Liang went on.

“Now if Cao Cao attacks, what is to be done?” said Zhuge Liang.

“Repel him with all my strength.”

“But if Cao Cao and Sun Quan attack you together, what then?”

“Fight both; half my force against each.”

Zhuge Liang said, “In that case, Jingzhou would be in danger. I will give you my advice in a few words, and if you remember them, the region is safe.”

“What are these few words?” asked Guan Yu.

“North, fight Cao Cao; south, ally with Sun Quan.”

“These words, O Instructor, are engraved on my heart.”

Thereupon, the seal was placed in his hands. Zhuge Liang also appointed tried and worthy people to assist the new commander. Guan Yu’s civil staff included Ma Liang, Mi Zhu, and Yi Ji; on military side, he was assisted by Mi Fang, Liao Hua, Guan Ping, and Zhou Cang.

This done, Zhuge Liang began to prepare for his march to the River Lands. Zhang Fei, with ten thousand troops, was sent to fight his way into the country west of Bazhou and Luocheng, and he was to go with all speed. The earlier he got through, the greater merit would be his. Zhao Yun was to lead a force up the Great River and make a junction at Luocheng. Zhuge Liang, with his own body of fifteen thousand troops, would follow.

Among those who followed Zhuge Liang were Jian Yong and one Jiang Wan. Jiang Wan was a noted scholar from Lingling, and he held the office of Secretary.

Zhuge Liang and Zhang Fei set out the same day.

Just before leaving, the Directing Instructor said to Zhang Fei, "Do not think lightly of the soldiers of Yizhou, for there are many mighty warriors among them. On the march, restrain your soldiers from plunder and license lest the ordinary people be against us. Wherever you halt, be compassionate and kindly and do not give way to anger and flog your soldiers. I shall expect you to reach Luocheng very soon."

Zhang Fei joyously mounted and left. He marched rapidly, and on the way, all places that surrendered suffered nothing whatsoever.

When they drew near the county of Bazhou, the scouts of the West River Land sent out by the Governor of that place informed their master, Yan Yan. This Yan Yan was one of the famous generals of Yizhou, and even then, although he was rather old, he had lost none of his boldness and could still pull the stiffest bow and wield the heaviest sword.

Being so famous, Yan Yan was not the man to surrender at the first approach of an enemy. So when Zhang Fei came near, he cautiously encamped about three miles from the city. Then, he sent a messenger to summon the Governor to surrender.

Zhang Fei said, "Tell the old fool to give in, or I will trample down his walls and leave no soul alive."

Yan Yan had never favored inviting Liu Bei into Yizhou.

When he had first heard of the Imperial Protector's intention, he said, "This is like calling a tiger to protect a person when that person is alone on a bare hillside."

When he heard of the seizure of River Fu Pass, he was very angry and offered again and again to lead an army and drive out the aggressors. He had feared that his city would be attacked along this very road, so he had

prepared his army, and when Zhang Fei's message came, he mustered them, five thousand or so, to oppose him.

Then a certain person said to Yan Yan, "You must be careful how you oppose a man who, by the mere sound of his voice, scared the many legions of Cao Cao at Long Slope Bridge. Even Cao Cao himself was careful to keep out of his way. Your safety is in defense, lying behind your ramparts and within your deep moats till hunger shall have vanquished your enemies.

"This Zhang Fei has a very violent temper. If he is provoked, he vents his anger in flogging his soldiers. If you avoid battle, he will be irritated, and his cruelty to his soldiers will cause them to mutiny. Then you can attack and will succeed."

Yan Yan thought the advice good. He therefore resolved only to defend, and he set all his soldiers on the walls. When one of Zhang Fei's soldiers came up to the gate and shouted for them to open, Yan Yan gave orders to open the gate and admit the man. When the soldier had come within, he gave the submission demand as has been related before.

But the Governor was exceedingly angry and said, "Fool that you are! How dare you speak thus to me? Think you that I, General Yan Yan, will surrender to such as him? By your mouth, indeed, will I send a message." Then, Yan Yan bade the executioner cut off the man's ears and nose.

And thus mutilated, the messenger returned to Zhang Fei. When Zhang Fei heard of it, his wrath boiled up and he cursed the defender of the city. Grinding his teeth and glaring with rage, he put on his armor, mounted his steed, and went up close to the walls with a few mounted followers, and challenged those on the ramparts to fight him. But the defenders on the walls only replied with shameful abuse, and none accepted the challenge. Zhang Fei galloped again and again to the drawbridge, only to be driven off each time with flights of arrows. But not a man came outside the walls. As

the day closed in, the warrior, still fuming with wrath, returned to his own camp.

Next day, Zhang Fei again led his troops to the foot of the wall and challenged. Again, the challenge was refused. But Yan Yan shot an arrow from the tower that struck Zhang Fei's helmet. This angered him still more.

Pointing the finger of disdain at his enemy, Zhang Fei cried, "I will capture you yet, you old fool, and then I will devour your flesh!"

So again, at eventide the troops of Jingzhou returned to camp bucking their desire. On the third day, Zhang Fei and his troops lined the perimeter of the city along the edge of the moat, hurling insults at their enemies.

It so happened that the city was set on a hill with rugged heights all round so that, going around it, the assailants were sometimes on hilltops and sometimes on the level. While standing on one of the hills, Zhang Fei noticed that he could see clear down into the city. There stood the defenders in their ranks, all ready for battle although none of them came out. And the common people went to and fro carrying bricks and bringing stones to strengthen the defenses.

Then, Zhang Fei ordered his horsemen to dismount and his footmen to sit down so that they could not be seen from the city. He hoped thus to cheat the defenders into thinking that there were none to attack and so induce them to come out. But this also was vain, for still the defenders declined battle, and another day was lost. The army once more returned to camp.

That night, Zhang Fei sat in his tent trying to think out some means to overcome an enemy that steadily refused to come out from behind the walls. Presently, however, the brain behind the knitted brows conceived a plan. So next day, instead of sending all the troops to offer a challenge from the foot of the wall, Zhang Fei kept most of them in camp and sent only a few to howl insults and hurl abuse. He hoped by this means to inveigle Yan

Yan out to attack the small number of troops. But this also failed, and he was left all day rubbing his hands with impatience. Never a man appeared without the wall.

Foiled again, another ruse grew up behind his bushy eyebrows. He set his troops to cut firewood and seek out and explore the paths that lay about the city. No longer did they challenge the wall. After some days of this, Yan Yan began to wonder what mischief was brewing, and he sent out spies, dressed as were the firewood cutters, to mingle with them and try to discover what was afoot.

That day, when the troops returned to camp, Zhang Fei sat in his tent, stamping his foot with rage and execrating his enemy.

“The old fool! Assuredly I shall die of disappointed wrath,” cried he.

Just then, he noticed three or four soldiers lurking about his tent door as if they wished to speak with him.

One of them said, “General, do not let your heart be hot within you. These last few days we have discovered a narrow road by which we can sneak past this city.”

“Why did you not come and tell me before?” cried he.

“Because we have only lately discovered it,” said they.

“I will lose no time then,” said he. “This very night, let food be ready at the second watch, and we will break camp and steal away as silently as possible. I will lead the way, and you shall go with me as guides.”

The requisite orders were given.

Having made sure that the preparations for the march were really being made, the spies of the Governor returned into the city.

“I guessed right, then,” said Yan Yan gleefully when the spies reported their success. “I cannot bear the fool. He will now try to sneak past with his

commissariat following, and I will cut off his rear. How can he get through? He is very stupid to fall thus into my trap. All are to prepare for battle. The food is to be ready at the second watch, and the army is to move out at the third. We will hide in the woods and thickets till the greater part of the enemy's army has passed and Zhang Fei has arrived in the very throat of the road. Then the blow will be struck."

They waited till night had fallen. In due time, the late meal was taken, the soldiers donned their armor, stole silently out of the city, and hid as they had been told. The Governor himself, with a few of his generals, went out also, dismounted, and hid in a wood. They waited till after the third watch. Then Zhang Fei came along, urging his troops to the top of their speed. His spear lay ready to thrust. He looked very handsome as he rode at the head of his army. The carts were one or two miles in the rear.

When the soldiers had gotten well past, Yan Yan gave the signal. The drums rolled out, and up sprang the hidden troops to fall on the baggage train.

The western troops began to plunder. But suddenly, a gong clanged, and along came a company of soldiers Yan Yan had not seen.

At the same time, a voice was heard shouting, "Old rebel, do not flee! I have been waiting for this chance a long time!"

Yan Yan turned his head. The leader of this band was a tall man with a leopard-like bullet head, round eyes, a sharp chin, and bristling tiger mustache. He was armed with a long Serpent Halberd and rode a black steed. Put simply, it was Zhang Fei.

All around, the gongs were clanging, and many troops of Jingzhou were rushing toward Yan Yan, already too frightened to be able to defend themselves. However, the two leaders engaged. Very soon, Zhang Fei purposely gave his opponent an opening, and Yan Yan rushed in to cut

down his enemy with his sword. But Zhang Fei evaded the blow, made a sudden rush, seized Yan Yan by the lace of his armor, and flung him on the ground. Yan Yan was a prisoner, and in a moment was fast-bound with cords.

The handsome leader who had passed first had not been Zhang Fei at all, but someone dressed and made up to resemble him. To add to the confusion, Zhang Fei had exchanged the signals, making the gong the signal for his troops to fall on instead of the usual drum.

As the gongs clanged, more and more of the troops of Jingzhou came into the fray. The troops of Yizhou could make no fight, and most of them dropped their weapons and surrendered. To reach the walls of the city was now easy. After entering the gates, Zhang Fei ordered his soldiers not to hurt the people, and he put out proclamations to pacify the citizens.

Zhang Fei took his seat in the great hall, and the late commander of the city was brought before him by a party of executioners. Yan Yan refused to kneel before his captor.

“Why did you not surrender at first?” cried Zhang Fei, angrily grinding his teeth. “How dared you try to oppose me?”

“Because you are a lot of unrighteous and lawless invaders!” replied Yan Yan without the least sign of fear. “You may behead me as you will, but I will not surrender to you.”

Zhang Fei angrily gave the order for his execution.

“Strike if you want to, fool. Why so angry?” said Yan Yan.

This bold defiance was not lost upon Zhang Fei. Rising from his seat, he went down the steps, put aside the lictors, and began to loosen the prisoner’s bonds. Then he dressed Yan Yan in new garments and led him to the high place.

When Yan Yan was seated, Zhang Fei made a low bow, saying, “I have always known you were a hero. Now I pray you not remember against me the roughness of my speech.”

Yan Yan was overcome with this kindness and forthwith surrendered.



A graybeard ruled in western Shu,
Clear fame is his the whole world through.
As radiant sun his loyalty,
Unmatched his soul's nobility.
When captive taken, rather he
Would suffer death than crook his knee.
Bazhou he ruled for many a year,
The world cannot produce his peer.

A poet has also written concerning Zhang Fei:

Yan Yan made prisoner, then the matchless one
Exchanged the sword for reason, and so won
The place he holds among the sacred ones
Of the west, to whom they sacrifice today.



Then, Zhang Fei asked Yan Yan to suggest the means of overcoming the West River Land.

Yan Yan replied, “I am but the defeated leader of a defeated force, indebted to the victor for my life. I have nothing but my humble services to

offer, but I can tell you how to get possession of Chengdu without drawing a bow or shooting an arrow.”

Cities yield in quick succession
Because of one old man's secession.

The proposal will be unfolded in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XV

CHAPTER 64

ZHUGE LIANG PLANS FOR THE CAPTURE OF ZHANG REN; YANG FU
BORROWS SOLDIERS TO DESTROY MA CHAO.

As stated in the last chapter, Zhang Fei asked Yan Yan to tell him how he might conquer the whole of the West River Land.

This was the reply: "All the fortified posts between this and Luocheng are under my control, and the commanders of all the garrisons owe to me their commissions. The only way for me to prove my gratitude is to make them all yield, as I myself have done. Let me lead the advance, and I will summon them one by one to surrender."

Zhang Fei thanked him again and again, and the march on this plan began. Whenever the army arrived at a post, Yan Yan summoned the commander, and there it ended. Occasionally, one would hesitate, when Yan Yan would say, "You see I have submitted. How much more ought you to do so?"

These bloodless victories followed each other day after day, supporters rallying to the invaders without question. They simply came.

In the meantime, Zhuge Liang was preparing. Having decided upon the date of departure, he wrote to inform Liu Bei and made Luocheng the rendezvous for the various armies. On receipt of this letter, Liu Bei assembled his officers and explained to them its purport. He bade them be

ready to march on the twenty-second day of the seventh month. Both river and land forces were to set out the same day.

But the fiery old man Huang Zhong was dissatisfied that there should be no local victory at the River Fu Pass.

He said, "Day after day, the enemy has come to challenge us, and day after day, we have refused. They must have grown lax, and I propose a night raid on their camp. We shall catch them unprepared and shall score a victory."

Liu Bei agreed to try. He arranged for a night raid, Huang Zhong on the right, Wei Yan on the left, and the center force under his own command. They set out at the second watch and soon arrived. They found Zhang Ren's troops unprepared, rushed the camp, and set it on fire. The flames were very fierce, and the troops of Yizhou fled in confusion and sought shelter in Luocheng. They were admitted. After pursuing them for some distance, Liu Bei made a camp.

Next day, Liu Bei marched right up to the city to besiege it. Zhang Ren kept quiet within and made no attempt to beat off the besiegers. On the fourth day, Liu Bei led an attack on the west gate, sending Huang Zhong and Wei Yan to attack the east. The north and south gates were left to give the besieged a chance to escape if they would.

Now outside the south gate of Luocheng, the country was rough and hilly, while the swift River Fu ran past the north. For this reason, the city could not be surrounded. From the city wall, Zhang Ren watched the progress of the attack and saw Liu Bei the whole day indefatigably going to and fro, directing the assault. He also saw that as the sun dropped toward the west, the attacking force showed signs of weariness. Wherefore he sent his two generals, Wu Lan and Lei Tong, out of the city by the north gate with orders to make their way around and attack Huang Zhong and Wei

Yan. Zhang Ren set himself to go out by the south gate and steal around to attack Liu Bei. Lest the withdrawal of troops from the ramparts should discover his plans, he sent the populace up on the walls to make a show and bade them shout loudly to reinforce the rolling of the drums.

At sundown, Liu Bei ordered the retirement of his army, and the rearmost company turned about to march back to camp. At this moment arose still louder shouting from the ramparts, and out at the south gate burst Zhang Ren and his force. Zhang Ren made straight for Liu Bei, who was in the middle of his army. Liu Bei's soldiers were thrown into confusion. As his two generals on the east side were also attacked, they could render no help, and Liu Bei fled to the hills. Zhang Ren followed and soon got very near. They were a whole company pursuing one solitary man, and as Liu Bei plied his whip, he felt that the odds were much against him. Just then, he saw another company of soldiers ahead, emerging from a hill path.

"An ambush in front, pursuers in rear! Surely Heaven wishes to destroy me!" cried Liu Bei.

But all was not lost. As they drew nearer, he recognized his own troops, and the leader who dashed to meet him was his Brother Zhang Fei.

Zhang Fei and Yan Yan had happened to take that road, and Zhang Fei had hastened forward when he saw the dust of conflict.

Zhang Fei and Zhang Ren soon came up with each other, and they fought ten bouts. By this time, Yan Yan, with the main body, had come up, and Zhang Ren turned and fled. Zhang Fei followed and chased him as far as the city wall. The gate was opened to allow Zhang Ren to enter and at once shut. The drawbridge was raised.

Then, Zhang Fei returned to his elder Brother to report his arrival and the incidents of the way.

Hearing that Zhuge Liang had not yet arrived, Zhang Fei rejoiced, saying, "So I have the credit of first arrival, although he is traveling by river."

Liu Bei said, "But how is it you have come so quickly, seeing the precipitous road you had to travel? Did you meet no opposition?"

Zhang Fei replied, "The fact is I have taken the forty-five garrisons on the way by making use of General Yan Yan, whom I captured. It was not my own merit at all. I have come all the way without the least effort."

Zhang Fei told the story of Yan Yan's capture and services from beginning to end, and then presented the man himself.

Liu Bei said, "General, my Brother's speedy arrival is certainly owing to your help."

Whereupon, Liu Bei took off the golden chain mantle he was wearing and gave it to his new ally.

Orders were given for a banquet.

While it was being prepared, a messenger came to report, saying, "Huang Zhong and Wei Yan had been fighting with Wu Lan and Lei Tong and had held their own, till enemy reinforcements led by Wu Yi and Liu Gui arrived. Huang Zhong and Wei Yan then fled eastward."

Zhang Fei at once asked his Brother to go with him to rescue them. Both went. When Wu Yi and Liu Gui saw the army of Jingzhou coming, they retired into the city.

Wu Lan and Lei Tong continued the pursuit. The coming of Liu Bei and Zhang Fei threatened their rear, and Huang Zhong and Wei Yan turned and recommenced the battle. Wu Lan and Lei Tong were thus between two fires and helpless. They offered to surrender and were received. Liu Bei returned to his own camp near the city.

The loss of his two generals grieved Zhang Ren sorely. He called his remaining two and asked advice.

Wu Yi and Liu Gui proposed, saying, "This situation calls for one desperate battle, where we can hope to repel the enemy. Meanwhile, you should send to Chengdu to tell our master of our current plight."

Zhang Ren agreed. Said he, "Tomorrow I will go and challenge them. If they accept and come out to fight, I will feign retreat and inveigle them round to the north side of the city. As they follow me, a sortie must be made when they pass the gate so as to cut their army in two. We ought to overcome them in this way."

"Let me lead the sortie," said Wu Yi. "General Liu Gui can stay to help our lord's son Liu Xun guard the city."

This also was agreed to. Next morning, Zhang Ren went out to offer the challenge, his troops waving flags and shouting lustily. At once, Zhang Fei took up the challenge and rode out. He stayed not to parley but galloped up to Zhang Ren and engaged him. After about ten bouts, Zhang Ren seemed to be losing, so he turned and fled, taking the way around the north of the city. Zhang Fei pursued him with all speed. Then, as he passed the gate, Wu Yi made a sortie so that Zhang Fei was between two forces and unable to get clear. Zhang Ren turned back to attack.

Zhang Fei seemed in a parlous state. But at this very moment, a body of soldiers came up from the riverside and a fierce warrior rode straight for Wu Yi and, in the first bout, made him prisoner; his troops were then forced back, and Zhang Fei was free. It was Zhao Yun who had so opportunely appeared.

"Where is the Directing Instructor?" asked Zhang Fei.

“He has arrived. I think he has already seen our lord,” replied Zhao Yun.

The prisoner was carried to the camp where Zhuge Liang was. Zhang Fei dismounted and went in to greet him.

Zhuce Liang was surprised and said, “How comes it that you arrived before me?”

Liu Bei told the story of Zhang Fei’s prudence and sagacity in dealing with Yan Yan.

Zhuge Liang congratulated Zhang Fei and said, “When Zhang Fei behaves with such skill, my lord’s good fortune is indeed ample.”

When the prisoner was taken in, Liu Bei asked him if he would surrender.

Wu Yi replied, “Why not, seeing I am a prisoner?”

Thereupon, Liu Bei himself loosed his bonds. Zhuge Liang began to question him upon the defense.

Wu Yi told him the names of the officers, saying, “The son of the Imperial Protector, Liu Xun, and his generals Liu Gui and Zhang Ren are the defenders. Liu Gui does not count for much, but Zhang Ren is a man to be avoided.”

“Then before we can get the city, we must capture Zhang Ren,” said Zhuge Liang. “There is a bridge on the east. What is it called?”

“It is known as ‘Golden Goose Bridge.’”

Zhuge Liang rode over to the bridge and scrutinized the neighborhood. After his return to camp, he summoned Huang Zhong and Wei Yan for orders. To them, he said, “On the east of the city is a bridge called Golden Goose Bridge, and about two miles south of this, I saw a dense growth of reed and sedge which would afford excellent shelter. Wei Yan is to lead a

thousand spearmen to the left and attack, but only attack horsemen. Huang Zhong will lead a thousand swordsmen who are to cut the horses. When Zhang Ren has lost most of his troops and horses, he will flee by the hill road, where he will fall into an ambush of Zhang Fei.”

Next, Zhao Yun was called and given orders, “You are to lie in ambush close to the bridge, which you shall destroy as soon as Zhang Ren has crossed. After that, you shall take up a position beyond the bridge to prevent him from getting away to the north. Forced to the south, Zhang Ren will fall into our hands.”

These arrangements made, Zhuge Liang himself went to challenge the enemy and try to bring them to battle.

Imperial Protector Liu Zhang had sent two generals, Zhang Yi and Zhuo Ying, to reinforce Zhang Ren. Zhang Ren sent Zhang Yi to the help of Liu Gui in the city, while Zhuo Ying was to march second with Zhang Ren himself to encounter the enemy.

Zhuce Liang led across the bridge a mob of disorderly looking soldiers, all in disarray, whom he drew up as if they were a fighting force. He himself, dressed in a simple robe and toying with a fan, took his seat in a small, four-wheeled carriage. A few horsemen caracolng gaily to and fro formed his escort.

Having crossed the bridge, Zhuge Liang halted and pointed to Zhang Ren, saying, “Dare you withstand me and not surrender, when Cao Cao’s million troops fled at my name?”

But the enemy leader was rather occupied with inspecting the disorderly lot of soldiers he saw in front, all standing anyhow and not drawn up into formation at all.

With a cynical smile, Zhang Ren said, "People talk of Zhuge Liang's superhuman military genius. I say his reputation is false!"

With that, Zhang Ren whirled his spear about his head, and he dashed forward with all his troops. As he came, Zhuge Liang left his carriage, mounted a horse, and retired to the far side of the bridge. Zhang Ren impetuously pursued and rushed over the Golden Goose Bridge. It was only when he had reached the other side that he saw a body of soldiers on either hand. Then he knew that he had been led into a trap.

As soon as he had got across the bridge, the two bodies of soldiers under Liu Bei and Yan Yan came to the attack. Zhang Ren turned to get back to the bridge, but Zhao Yun had done his work and the bridge was in ruins. Zhang Ren made to turn north, but Zhao Yun's troops stopped the way so he had to turn southward and follow the course of the river. He presently reached the place where grew the reeds and sedges. Out came Wei Yan and his company of spearmen, who stabbed at the horsemen fiercely while Huang Zhong, with his swordsmen, cut down the horses. Soldiers and horses were soon lying on the ground. The few survivors were quickly made prisoners and bound with cords.

No footman escaped. But a few lucky horsemen followed Zhang Ren and got away to the hills. There they met Zhang Fei, who fell upon them with a mighty roar, scattered the few followers, and captured the leader. Seeing Zhang Ren a prisoner, his second-in-command Zhuo Ying turned toward Zhao Yun and surrendered. Victorious, they returned to camp. Liu Bei rewarded Zhuo Ying.

When the leader Zhang Ren was led in by Zhang Fei, Zhuge Liang was seated beside his lord.

“Why have you held out so long after all the other generals of Yizhou have yielded?” said Liu Bei.

“Can a loyal servant take a second master?” cried Zhang Ren fiercely, his eyes glaring with hate. “You do not know the times. Submission means life. I might submit today, but it would not endure. I should repent it. You had better slay me.”

Liu Bei was inclined to mercy, but the prisoner was irreconcilable and kept up a stream of furious abuse. So at last the order was given for his execution, thus giving him a right to fame.



A poem says:

No second lord the heroic servant knows,
The way of death Zhang Ren contented goes.
Clear shines his fame as doth the heavenly moon
That nightly lights the ramparts of Luocheng Town.



Liu Bei grieved for Zhang Ren, although Zhang Ren had been an enemy, for he was a brave man. Zhang Ren was given honorable burial, sepulture beside the Golden Goose Bridge, where all the passers-by would be reminded of his loyalty.

Next day, the army moved on to Luocheng, Yan Yan and the other generals who had submitted leading the way.

At the gate, they hailed the defenders, "Open the gates and surrender, whereby the city should be saved from utter destruction!"

From the wall, Liu Gui abused the treacherous Yan Yan and took his bow to shoot. But just as Liu Gui was fitting the arrow to the string, another man cut him down. Soon the gates were thrown open and the city had yielded.

As Liu Bei entered the city by one gate, Liu Xun, who had shared the command of the city, escaped by another gate and set off for Chengdu.

Liu Bei put forth proclamations to allay the fears of the inhabitants of the city. He inquired who had been on his side in cutting down Liu Gui and was told it was Zhang Yi of Wuyang. Zhang Yi and all who had helped in the capture were amply rewarded.

"Our next city is Chengdu," said Zhuge Liang. "However, in the meantime there may be some trouble in pacifying the outlying counties, and hence it will be well for you to send Zhang Fei and Zhao Yun, with Wu Yi, Zhang Yi, Yan Yan, and Zhuo Ying leading the way, into the country along the river and Changyang, Deyang, and Baxi to reassure the people and to repress any rising that may take place. There will be no need for any especial precautions in the neighborhood of Chengdu."

The warriors went their ways, and then Zhuge Liang began to make careful inquiries concerning the road to Chengdu.

Those who had given in their allegiance to the invaders said, "The only place where you can expect any serious defense is Mianzhu. Once you have passed this, the capital lies at your mercy."

Then Fa Zheng was consulted. Said he, "With the fall of Luocheng, the West River Land passed to you. Let our lord only deal with the people

kindly and justly, and there will be no need of weapons. I can write such a letter to Imperial Protector Liu Zhang as shall make him surrender at call.”

“That would be most excellent,” said Zhuge Liang.

The letter was written and sent by the hand of a messenger.

Liu Xun, son of the Imperial Protector, presently reached Chengdu and told his father of the loss of Luocheng. The Imperial Protector at once called his counselors together.

Adviser Zheng Du said, “Although Liu Bei has been successful and captured cities and towns, yet his army is but small, his hosts are not near him, and he depends upon chance for his grain and has no proper supplies. Therefore, our best plan is to remove the people of Baxi and Zitong to the farther side of River Fu, burn all the granaries, fortify the city, and let starvation defeat him. Let us reject all challenges to battle, and in a hundred days, his troops will go off of their own accord. Then we can do with him as we will.”

“I like not the plan,” said Liu Zhang. “‘Oppose invaders in order that tranquility may prevail’ is a well-worn maxim, but till now I have never heard of disturbing the people in order to oppose the march of an enemy. Your words are not such as safety.”

Just at the moment, the letter from Fa Zheng arrived. It was opened, and the Imperial Protector read:

“I was sent to Jingzhou to negotiate an alliance, but the opposition of those about you to their lord has resulted in the present situation. However, the ruler of Jingzhou still remembers old

friendship and is mindful of the ties of relationship. If you, my master, could reverse your policy and lend your support to your relative, I think you would be generously treated. I hope you will consider this carefully.”

Liu Zhang flew into a passion. He tore the letter to fragments and began to abuse its writer, crying, “That traitor, ingrate, and renegade! How dare he talk thus to me?”

And Liu Zhang drove the bearer of the letter from his presence. He then sent an army under the leadership of Fei Guan, his wife’s brother, to reinforce Mianzhu.

Fei Guan at once recommended as his assistant one Li Yan of Nanyang, and the two mustered their troops, thirty thousand, and set out for the city.

At this juncture, Dong He, the Governor of Yizhou City, wrote advising to borrow aid from Hanzhong.

But Liu Zhang rejected this plan, saying, “It will be useless to try to obtain help from a region under the influence of our relentless enemy Zhang Lu.”

Dong He replied, “He may be an enemy, but Liu Bei is in possession of Luocheng, and the situation is extremely dangerous. When the lips are gone, the teeth are cold. If you clearly indicate the dangers to him, he must come to our help.”

So a letter was written and sent to Hanzhong.

Two years had elapsed since Ma Chao had been defeated and gone over to the Qiang tribes in the northwest. He had made friends with them and with their aid had conquered portions of the West Valley Land. His expeditions had been very successful, the people opening their gates at the first summons.

Only Jicheng had withstood, but even this was on the point of yielding. The Governor of Jicheng, Wei Kang, had sent many urgent appeals for help to Xiahou Yuan in Changan, who, however, would do nothing without his master's order. Wei Kang was in despair, and at a council, his officers advised him to yield.

However, one of them, Yang Fu, earnestly opposed yielding, saying, "We cannot surrender to a lot of rebels such as Ma Chao and his colleagues."

"What is there to hope for?" asked Wei Kang despairingly.

Although Yang Fu besought Wei Kang with bitterness to hold out, it was useless. Wei Kang rejected his advice, opened the city gates, and bowed his head in submission.

"You only yield now as the last resource," cried Ma Chao, angry at the delay he had suffered. "This is no real submission."

Whereupon, he put to death Wei Kang and all his family to the number of two score.

But when they told Ma Chao that Yang Fu had been really responsible for the long delay, in that Yang Fu had urged his master to hold out, Ma Chao did not put him to death but praised him and said, "Yang Fu had but done his duty."

Ma Chao further showed his approval by employing Yang Fu and two of his friends in his own army. These two friends were named Liang Kuan

and Zhao Qu.

One day, Yang Fu went to his new chief and said, "My wife has died in Lintao. I wish to take leave for two months to bury her."

Wherefore Yang Fu was granted leave and went away from the army. On the way, he went to his maternal cousin, General Jiang Xu, Commander of Licheng. The general's mother, then an old lady of eighty-two was Yang Fu's aunt.

When Yang Fu saw her, he wept before her, saying, "Behold an unfortunate man! The city I had to defend is lost; my master is dead, and I have survived him. I am ashamed to look you in the face. Now this Ma Chao ravages the countryside, and everyone hates him. Yet my cousin sits still and does nothing against Ma Chao. Is this fitting conduct for a state servant?"

Yang Fu wept bitterly.

The old lady was moved by his grief, called in her son, and said to him reproachfully, "You are the cause of the evil that has come upon the noble Wei Kang." Then, turning once more toward Yang Fu, she said, "But what can now be done? You have surrendered, and more than that, you have accepted service under your late enemy."

"It is true," replied Yang Fu. "I have surrendered and I have accepted service, but it is with the desire to preserve my miserable life till I can avenge my master."

"Ma Chao is bold and difficult to destroy," said Jiang Xu.

"Not very difficult," replied Yang Fu, "for though he is bold, he is yet unskillful. Already I have two friends Liang Kuan and Zhao Qu by his side, and they would help against him if you, my brother, would only supply a force."

“What is to be gained by delay?” then said the old lady. “Is there anyone who will not have to die? To perish in the way of loyalty and righteousness is to die in the right path. Do not think of me, for if you do, and heed not the call of your cousin, then will I die at once so that you may be free to make up your mind.”

There was now no excuse for delay, and Jiang Xu had to act. He summoned two of his officers, Yin Feng and Zhao Ang, and took counsel with them.

Now Zhao Ang had a son, Zhao Yue, who was an officer in the army of Ma Chao. When Zhao Ang had to consent to take part against his son’s chief, he became very unhappy and went home to talk over it with his wife, Lady Wang.

He said, “I have today been led into a scheme to destroy Ma Chao and avenge Wei Kang. But there is our son there in Ma Chao’s service, and Ma Chao will certainly put our son to death as soon as he hears that we are arming against him. What is to be done?”

But his wife replied angrily, “Should anyone grudge even his life to avenge his liege lord or his father? How much less a son? My lord, if you let the thought of your son stay your hand, then will I die forthwith.”

This decided the matter, and without further parley, Zhao Ang decided to share the expedition and set about preparations.

The army was soon on the way. Jiang Xu and Yang Fu camped at the city of Lucheng; Zhao Ang and Yin Feng camped at Qishan. The wife of Zhao Ang sold her ornaments and went in person to her husband’s camp to feast his soldiers.

The fears of Zhao Ang concerning the fate of his son were only too soon justified. At the first news of the march of an army against him, Ma

Chao beheaded the young Zhao Yue. Then Ma Chao marched his force, together with Pang De and Ma Dai, to Lucheng, and the troops under Jiang Xu and Yang Fu went out to oppose it. The two leaders on the avenging side went to battle dressed in mourning white.

They railed at Ma Chao, crying, "Wicked traitor! Rebel!"

Ma Chao angrily dashed across toward them, and the fight began. From the very first, it was seen that the defenders of the city could not hope to beat off the attack, and they turned to flee. Ma Chao pursued them. But soon he heard the shouting of soldiers behind him and found the other army led by Zhao Ang and Yin Feng was attacking his rear. Wherefore he was between two armies and had a double battle to fight. As he turned toward those in his rear, Jiang Xu and Yang Fu returned again to the attack. And while engaged with these two, there suddenly appeared a third force under Xiahou Yuan, who had just received orders from Cao Cao to come against Ma Chao.

Three attacks at once were too much for Ma Chao, and he fled, his force in utter confusion. He retreated all that night and at dawn reached his own city of Jicheng. He hailed the gate, but a flight of arrows was the response. Soon after, Liang Kuan and Zhao Qu appeared and reviled him from the ramparts above. More than this, they dragged his wife, Lady Yang, up upon the wall, hacked her before his face, and threw the bloody body at his feet. They followed this up by the murder in like manner of his three sons and other members of his family to the number of ten and more. And all their dead bodies were flung from the wall.

Rage and despair filled Ma Chao's bosom; he almost fell from his steed. But little time was allowed him to grieve, for Xiahou Yuan was nearly upon him. Knowing that he could not oppose this force with any chance of victory, he made no battle line but set off with two of his

generals, Ma Dai and Pang De, to cut his way through such parties of the enemy as they might meet. Their sole object was escape, so when they fell upon Yang Fu and Jiang Xu, they only fought to get through, and in the same way they cut an alley through the army under Yin Feng and Zhao Ang. However, they lost most of their few followers and at the end had only some sixty horsemen left.

About the fourth watch, they came to Licheng. In the darkness, the gate guards, thinking only of the return of their own troops, opened the gates and unwittingly let in the enemy. Once in the city, Ma Chao and his followers began the slaughter, and everyone, soldier or common person, was slain, till the city was swept clear from the south gate to the very center.

Presently they came to the residence of Jiang Xu and dragged forth his aged mother. She showed no sign of fear but reviled Ma Chao till in his anger he slew her with his own sword. Thence, they went to the house of Yin Feng and Zhao Ang and slew all they found therein. The only person who escaped the massacre was Lady Wang, wife of Zhao Ang, who had accompanied her husband.

But the city proved no place of safety. Xiahou Yuan with his army appeared the following day, and Ma Chao fled before him to the west. But ere he had gone seven miles, he came face to face with another army drawn up in battle array. Yang Fu was the leader.

Grinding his teeth with rage, Ma Chao set his spear and rode at Yang Fu, while his two generals, Ma Dai and Pang De, attacked the rear. Yang Fu was overcome, and his seven brothers who had gone with him into the battle were slain. Yang Fu himself was wounded in five places, but still fought on till he was wounded down.

However, Xiahou Yuan had not abandoned his pursuit of Ma Chao. He came up to the city, and Ma Chao fled. Ma Chao's army was now reduced

to the two generals and about five or six horsemen, and these few were left to go their way.

Cao Cao's general, Xiahou Yuan, set himself to restore order and tranquility in the region of Xizhou, after which he apportioned its defense among Jiang Xu and other trustworthy commanders. The wounded leader Yang Fu was sent to the capital in a carriage. When he arrived at Xuchang, he saw Cao Cao, who offered him the title of Lordship.

But Yang Fu declined the honor, saying, "I have neither the credit of a successful defense nor the merit of death with my master. Death should be my portion rather than honors. How could I accept the offer?"

Cao Cao praised him and insisted on granting the lordship.

Having escaped from their pursuers, Ma Chao and his few followers decided to make for Hanzhong and offer their services to Governor Zhang Lu. Zhang Lu received them gladly, for he thought with such help he could certainly get possession of Yizhou on the west as well as repel Cao Cao on the east. More than this, he thought to cement the friendship by giving Ma Chao a daughter as wife. But this displeased one of Zhang Lu's generals, Yang Bo.

"The misfortune that befell Ma Chao's wife and family was entirely the fault of his own misconduct. Would you give your daughter to such as he to wife?" said Yang Bo.

Zhang Lu again considered the matter and abandoned his intention. But a certain busybody told Ma Chao what had been proposed and that Yang Bo had defeated the scheme. Whereupon, Ma Chao was very annoyed and sought to compass the death of Yang Bo. Yang Bo and his brother, Yang Song, on the other side conspired to destroy Ma Chao.

At this time, a messenger from Liu Zhang of Yizhou arrived in Hanzhong begging for assistance against the invader Liu Bei. Zhang Lu refused help. But then Huang Quan came on the same errand. He first saw Yang Song and talked to him and brought him to favor the scheme.

Huang Quan said, "The East and West River Lands, which stand next each other as the lips are close to the teeth, are interdependent. If Yizhou is lost, Hanzhong has little chance to survive. On the other hand, once relieved by your help, Imperial Protector Liu Zhang will reward twenty counties to Hanzhong as compensation."

So Huang Quan won over Yang Song, who led him to see his master. To Zhang Lu, again Huang Quan spoke forcibly and laid the matter before him so cogently that Zhang Lu promised his help.

But Yan Pu, one of Zhang Lu's officers, tried to dissuade him, saying, "This plea for help and offering of twenty counties are only their temporary tactics. Liu Zhang and you are old enemies. His promise is not to be trusted."

And another suddenly interjected, saying, "Useless I may be, but if you will give me troops, I will capture this Liu Bei, and you will retain all your land."

The land's true lord goes west and then

Hanzhong sends forth its bravest men.

Who made this bold offer? The next chapter will tell.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XV

CHAPTER 65

MA CHAO BATTLES AT JIAMENG PASS; LIU BEI TAKES OVER YIZHOU.

It was Yan Pu who thus opposed sending help to Liu Zhang.

Then Ma Chao rose and said, "I have been the recipient of much kindness from my lord, which I feel I can never repay adequately. Now let me lead an army to take Jiameng Pass and capture Liu Bei. Then, my lord, Liu Zhang will surely lose his twenty counties, and they shall be yours."

This offer rejoiced Zhang Lu, who sent away Huang Quan with a promise to help. Then Zhang Lu told off twenty thousand for Ma Chao to lead. Pang De was too ill to take part in the expedition, so he remained in Hanzhong. Zhang Lu ordered Yang Bo to be Army Supervisor. Ma Chao and Ma Dai chose a day to march to Jiameng Pass.

Meanwhile, the messenger sent to Chengdu by Fa Zheng had returned to Luocheng to report: "Zheng Du advised Liu Zhang to set fire to all the plains and valleys between the capital and the invaders, as well as the granaries, to move sway the people, and to stand solely on the defensive."

This news caused Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang great anxiety, for it would be a grave danger to them. However, Fa Zheng was more sanguine.

"Do not be anxious," said he. "The plan would be extremely harmful, but it will not be carried out. Liu Zhang will not do that."

Surely enough, very soon they heard that Liu Zhang had not adopted the suggestion; he would not remove the people. It was a great relief to Liu Bei.

Then, said Zhuge Liang, “Now let us capture Mianzhu quickly, for, that done, Chengdu is as good as ours.”

Liu Bei therefore told off Huang Zhong and Wei Yan to advance first. When the Commander of Mianzhu, Fei Guan, heard of their advance, he ordered Li Yan to go out to stop them, and Li Yan led out three thousand troops. The two sides being arrayed, Huang Zhong rode out and fought some half-a-hundred bouts with Li Yan. Neither was able to claim a victory, and so Zhuge Liang from the midst of the host ordered them to beat the gongs to cease from battle.

When Huang Zhong had got back to his side again, he said, “O Instructor, why did you sound the retirement just as I was getting the better of my opponent?”

“Because I saw that Li Yan was not to be overcome by mere force. Tomorrow you shall fight again, and then you shall lead him into the hills by the ruse of pretended defeat. There will be a surprise awaiting him.”

Huang Zhong agreed to try this plan and so, on the morrow, accepted Li Yan’s challenge when it was offered. After about the tenth bout, Huang Zhong and his troops pretended to be worsted and ran. Li Yan pursued and was quickly lured into the mountains. Suddenly his danger flashed into his mind, and he turned to go back.

But he found Wei Yan’s troops drawn up across his path.

From a hilltop near by, Zhuge Liang cried, “You had better yield! If not, there are bows and crossbows on both sides of you—all ready to avenge the death of our Pang Tong.”

Li Yan dropped off his horse, threw aside his armor, and offered submission. Not a soldier of his had been hurt. The prisoner was conducted to Liu Bei, who was very affable and so won Li Yan's heart that Li Yan offered to try to seduce Fei Guan from his allegiance.

"Though he is related to Liu Zhang, Fei Guan and I are very close friends. Let me go and persuade him."

Wherefore, Li Yan was sent back to the city to induce his chief to come over to Liu Bei's side. Li Yan talked to such effect of the kindness and virtues of Liu Bei that Fei Guan was won over, opened the city gates, and admitted the invaders.

As soon as Liu Bei had entered Mianzhu, he set out his forces to take the capital.

While thus engaged, a hasty messenger came to tell of the doings at Jiameng Pass: "There suddenly appeared an army from the east under Ma Chao, Ma Dai, and Yang Bo. They are attacking, and the Pass will certainly be lost if help is not sent quickly."

"We need both Zhang Fei and Zhao Yun for this," remarked Zhuge Liang. "Then we could oppose successfully."

"But Zhao Yun is away," said Liu Bei. "However, Zhang Fei is here. Let us send him quickly."

"Do not say anything, my lord," said Zhuge Liang. "Let me stir him to fight his noblest."

But as soon as Zhang Fei heard of the danger, he came rushing in, shouting, "I must say farewell, Brother! I am off to fight Ma Chao."

However, Zhuge Liang made as if he heard not and said to Liu Bei, "That Ma Chao has invaded Jiameng Pass, and we have no one to drive him

back. Nobody can stand up to him, unless we can get Guan Yu from Jingzhou. Guan Yu could do it.”

“Why do you despise me, O Instructor?” cried Zhang Fei. “Did I not once drive back a whole army with my mere voice? Think you that I mind a stupid fool like Ma Chao?”

Zhuge Liang said, “Yes, General, but when you forced back the waters and broke the Long Slope Bridge, you succeeded because your enemies were doubtful. If they had known, you would not have come off so easily. Now, all the world knows this Ma Chao and has heard about his six battles at the River Wei and how he made Cao Cao cut off his beard and throw away his robe. Ma Chao very nearly slew Cao Cao, too. This is no lightsome task like that, and even Guan Yu might fail.”

“All I care for is to go, and if I do not overcome this fellow, I will take the consequences.”

“Well, if you will put that in writing, you may lead the attack. And I will ask our lord to lead another army to back you up this time. He can leave the defense of this town to me till Zhao Yun returns.”

“I also want to go,” said Wei Yan.

Wei Yan was allowed to go with five hundred light horses in advance of Zhang Fei. Liu Bei marched third. Wei Yan and his scouts soon arrived at Jiameng Pass and there fell in with Yang Bo. They engaged, but after a few bouts Yang Bo fled.

At this success, Wei Yan was seized with ambition to rival it and try to snatch the credit that would fall to Zhang Fei. So he pursued. But he presently came across a line of battle all drawn up, the commander being Ma Dai. Wei Yan, thinking it was the redoubtable Ma Chao, rode toward him whirling his sword. Soon Ma Dai turned and ran away, and Wei Yan

followed him. However, Ma Dai presently turned back and shot an arrow, which wounded Wei Yan in the left arm so that he left the pursuit and turned his face the other way. Then Ma Dai came after him and chased Wei Yan nearly up to the Pass.

Here, Ma Dai was suddenly confronted by a fierce thunder-roaring leader who dashed down from the Pass as if on a flying steed.

It was Zhang Fei, who had just arrived. Hearing the noise of battle below the Pass, Zhang Fei had come to learn what it meant and saw the arrow wound in Wei Yan. Soon, Zhang Fei was in the saddle and off to the rescue. But before he engaged, he would ascertain if the foe was worthy of his steel.

“Who are you? Tell your name,” cried Zhang Fei, “then I may fight with you.”

“I am Ma Dai of Xiliang.”

“As you are not Ma Chao, go away quickly, for you are no match for me. You may bid Ma Chao himself come, and tell him that Zhang Fei of Yan is here.”

“How dare you treat me with contempt?” cried Ma Dai in hot anger, and he came galloping up with his spear set ready to thrust. But after a half-score bouts, he fled.

Zhang Fei was about to pursue when a rider came up to him hastily, crying, “Do not pursue, my Brother.”

The rider was Liu Bei, and Zhang Fei stopped. The two returned together to the Pass.

“I knew your impulsive temper, and so I followed you. Since you have gotten the better of him, you may well rest and recuperate for the fight tomorrow with Ma Chao.”

The rolling of drums at dawn next day declared the arrival of Ma Chao. Liu Bei looked at the array from a point of vantage and saw Ma Chao emerge from the shadow of his great standard. Ma Chao wore a lion helmet, and his belt was clasped with the shaggy head of a wild beast. His breastplate was silver and his robe of white. As his dress and bearing were so extraordinary, so were his abilities superior. And Liu Bei looked at him, sighing admiringly.

“He justifies what people say,” said Liu Bei. “Handsome Ma Chao.”

Zhang Fei was for going down at once, but his Brother once more checked him, saying, “No, not yet. Avoid the first keenness of his fighting ardor.”

Thus below was Ma Chao challenging Zhang Fei, while, above, Zhang Fei was fretting at being unable to settle Ma Chao. Time after time, Zhang Fei started out, but each time, his Brother checked him. And so it continued till past midday, when Liu Bei, noticing signs of fatigue and weariness among Ma Chao’s army, decided that it was time to let Zhang Fei try his fortune. Whereupon, Liu Bei chose out five hundred horsemen to accompany his Brother and let the party go.

Ma Chao, seeing Zhang Fei coming with so small a force, signaled with his spear to his array to retire a bowshot, and Zhang Fei’s troops halted. When all his troops had taken their places, Zhang Fei set his Serpent Halberd and rode out.

“Do you know who I am?” shouted Zhang Fei. “I am Zhang Fei of Yan!”

Ma Chao replied, “My family having been noble for many generations, I am not likely to know any rustic dolts!”

This reply upset Zhang Fei, and in a moment, the two steeds were rushing toward each other, both men with poised spears. The fight began and continued for a hundred bouts. Neither had the advantage.

“A veritable tiger of a leader,” sighed Liu Bei.

But Liu Bei felt that Zhang Fei was running a risk; wherefore he sounded the gong as a signal to cease the fight, and each drew off to his own side. Zhang Fei rested his steed for a time. Then, leaving his helmet, he wound a turban about his head, mounted, and rode out to renew the fight. Ma Chao also came out, and the duel continued.

Presently, Liu Bei thought his Brother in danger. So he girded on his armor and went down into the plain. He watched till they had fought another hundred bouts, and then as both seemed to wax fiercer than ever, he gave the signal again to cease the battle. Both drew off and returned each to his own side.

It was then getting late, and Liu Bei said to his Brother, “You had better retire for today. He is a terrible opponent. Try him again tomorrow.”

But Zhang Fei’s spirit was roused, and it was unlikely that such advice would be palatable.

“No,” shouted he, “I will die and not come back!”

“But it is late. You cannot go on fighting,” said Liu Bei.

“Let them bring torches, and we will have a night battle,” said Zhang Fei.

Ma Chao, having mounted a fresh steed, now rode out and shouted, “Dare you try a night battle, Zhang Fei?”

Zhang Fei’s excitement rose higher. He hastily changed horses with his Brother and rode forth.

“If I do not capture you, I will not go back to the Pass,” said Zhang Fei.

“And if I do not overcome you, I will not return to the camp,” said Ma Chao.

Both sides cheered. They lit many thousands of torches till it seemed as light as day, and the two great generals went to the front to fight. At the twentieth bout, Ma Chao turned his steed and fled.

“Whither are you going?” called out Zhang Fei.

The fact was that Ma Chao had begun to see he could not win in direct and simple combat, so he thought to try a ruse. By a false flight, as though he knew he had lost, he would inveigle Zhang Fei into pursuit. He picked up a copper mace secretly and kept a careful watch on his opponent for the most favorable moment to strike.

But Ma Chao’s flight only put Zhang Fei upon his guard, and when the moment came for the blow with the mace, he dodged so that the weapon flew harmlessly past his ear. Then Zhang Fei turned his horse, whereupon Ma Chao began to pursue. Then Zhang Fei pulled up, took his bow, fitted an arrow to the string, and let fly at Ma Chao. But Ma Chao also dodged, and the arrow flew by. Then each returned to his own side.

Then Liu Bei came out to the front of his battle line and called out, “Note well, O Ma Chao, that I, who have never treated people other than with kindness and justice and truth and sincerity, swear that I will not take advantage of your period of repose to pursue or attack. Wherefore, you may rest awhile in peace.”

Ma Chao, hearing these words, withdrew guarding the rear, and the other generals one by one returned, while Liu Bei drew off his army toward the Pass.

Early next day, Zhang Fei was once more going down out of the Pass to fight, when they told him that the Directing Instructor had arrived. Liu Bei went to receive him, and Zhuge Liang at once began to speak of Ma Chao.

“He is the most terrible leader of the age. If he fights a desperate battle with Zhang Fei, loss of a general will ensue. So I have come as quickly as I could. I left Mianzhu in the safe hands of Zhao Yun and Huang Zhong. I think I have a little ruse left that will bring Ma Chao over to our side.”

“Now I have seen the man. I greatly admire him,” said Liu Bei. “If we could only win him over!”

“Then listen, my lord,” said Zhuge Liang. “Zhang Lu greatly desires the title of ‘Prince of Hanzhong.’ Among his most intimate subordinates, I know Yang Song open to bribery. So we will send a person secretly to see him and give him gold and silver and so win his support. This done, we will write to Zhang Lu and tell him that you are set upon taking Yizhou from its present ruler, which will give an opportunity to wipe out the enmity he has so long nourished against Liu Zhang, and that the reward of his remaining firmly on our side to the end will be that you will memorialize the Throne for the coveted title for him. This will make him order Ma Chao to return, and, when that is done, I shall find a means of winning him over.”

Liu Bei wrote a letter and sent it by the hand of Sun Qian together with gold and pearls. Sun Qian went by secret roads to give these to Yang Song. And when he found Yang Song and explained his mission in private, he was quickly led into the presence of Zhang Lu.

“How can Liu Bei memorialize the Throne to confer on me the rank of a prince when he is but a simple General himself?” asked Zhang Lu when he understood the offer and its conditions.

“He is an Imperial Uncle,” said Yang Song. “With such a rank, he could present such a memorial.”

Zhang Lu assented. He sent orders to Ma Chao to cease fighting, and Sun Qian remained as the guest of Yang Song till he could see whether Ma Chao would obey the command. Before long, the messenger returned with a word from Ma Chao that he could not cease fighting till he had been successful. A second and third messenger returned with a similar response.

“This Ma Chao is untrustworthy,” said Yang Song. “He will not withdraw his soldiers because he contemplates rebellion. That is the real reason.”

Yang Song set stories afloat rumoring: “Ma Chao desires to make himself the ruler of the west and has said that he will no longer be content with subordinate rank. And he means to avenge the death of his father.”

The rumors came to the ear of Zhang Lu, and he asked Yang Song what should be done.

Yang Song proposed, “Give Ma Chao a limit of a month in order to accomplish his task, provided he consents to three conditions. And if he does not agree, he will have to be put to death. The three conditions are the capture of the West River Land, the head of Liu Zhang, and the repulse of the Jingzhou troops. If he fails in any one of these, just bring his head. Meanwhile, Zhang Wei should be sent as guard at one of the strategic points which will control Ma Chao’s army in case of rebellion.”

When Ma Chao heard the three demands made on him, he was greatly troubled, saying, “What can such a charge mean?”

After taking counsel with Ma Dai, it seemed best to suspend fighting, and the army returned.

But Yang Song had not yet attained his end, so he said to Zhang Lu, “Ma Chao’s return with an army will be a danger, and hence all the points of vantage on the homeward road must be guarded so that to stop him.”

Thus, Ma Chao was helpless and could see no way out of the difficulty.

Then, Zhuge Liang said to his lord, “Now is my chance to use my three little inches of unworn tongue. Ma Chao is in a fix. I am going to his camp to persuade him to come over to your side.”

“But I would not like you to run such a risk, Instructor. You are my most necessary support, and if anything happened to you, what would I do?”

Zhuce Liang was set upon going and persisted in his request. Liu Bei again and again refused.

At this juncture, a messenger came with letters from Zhao Yun. Liu Bei called him in and questioned him. He was Li Hui of Jianning, the man who had formerly remonstrated so earnestly with Liu Zhang.

“You once pleaded with your master to keep me out. Why are you here now?”

“Because the prudent bird chooses its perch, and the wise person his master. I did attempt to dissuade Liu Zhang of Yizhou from a course which I felt to be disastrous and thereby fulfilled my duty as his servant. He rejected my counsel, and I knew he would fail. Your liberality, O General, has won over all the region, and success must be yours. I wish to serve under your banner.”

“Your services will surely be of great advantage to me, Sir,” said Liu Bei.

Then Li Hui began to talk of Ma Chao, "I knew him when we were in the West Valley Land together. He is now in great straits, and I may be able to talk him over. What say you?"

"Just the man to go instead of me," interjected Zhuge Liang. "But what arguments will you use?"

Li Hui leaned over and whispered in his ear thus and thus. What he said seemed to please Zhuge Liang mightily, and he was bidden to go forthwith.

Arrived at the camp, Li Hui sent in his name, at which Ma Chao remarked, "Yes, I know him—a glib and specious persuader. I know what he has come for, too."

So Ma Chao placed a score of armed ruffians in hiding about his tent and told them to cut the visitor to pieces if the signal were given.

Then the guest was led in and came walking proudly. His host remained seated stiff and upright.

Ma Chao spoke roughly, saying, "What are you come for?"

"I am here as persuader."

"This sword here in the scabbard is newly ground. You may try me by words, but if the words do not penetrate, I shall ask you to try the sword."

Li Hui smiled, saying, "O General, evil is not far off. However, I am thinking the newly ground sword will not be tried on my head. You will want to try it on your own!"

"What evil were you talking about?"

“The worst vilification could not hide the beauty of Lady Xi Shi of Yue, nor could the most fulsome praise gloze over the ugliness of Lady Wuyan of Qi. The sun rises to the meridian and then declines; the moon waxes to the full and then wanes. All things obey the one law.

“Now, General, you are at enmity with Cao Cao for your father’s death, and in the West Valley Land, you carry a stubborn, grinding hate for your family’s death. You can neither rescue Liu Zhang by repulsing the army from Jingzhou, nor can you settle Yang Song by getting an interview with Zhang Lu. The whole world now holds no place for a person without a lord; if you experience further defeats, like that one on the River Wei, or the loss of Jicheng, will you not be too shamed to look any man in the face?”

Ma Chao bowed his head, saying, “You speak well, Sir. But I am helpless.”

“Now that you listen to me, I would ask why those fearsome ruffians are in hiding by your tent?” continued Li Hui.

Ma Chao, suddenly stricken with shame, ordered them to retire. Li Hui continued his speech.

“Liu Bei, the Imperial Uncle, is considerate to his subordinates, and I am certain he will succeed, so I have forsaken Liu Zhang to cleave to him. Your honored father joined him in destroying rebels. Why do you not flee from darkness into the light? Thereby, you would avenge your father and become famous.”

Ma Chao, convinced of the wisdom of the course thus recommended, proved his conversion by sending for Yang Bo and slaying him forthwith. Taking with him the head of his victim, Ma Chao accompanied Li Hui to the Pass and tendered his submission. Liu Bei welcomed him warmly and treated him as a highly honored guest.

Ma Chao bowed his head, saying, "Meeting you, O Illustrious Lord, is like seeing the clear sky when the clouds have been swept aside."

When Sun Qian returned from Yang Song's place, Liu Bei detached a force to go to the capture of Chengdu, left two generals, Meng Da and Huo Jun, to guard Jiameng Pass, and made a triumphant entry into Mianzhu with the welcome of Zhao Yun and Huang Zhong.

Two generals of the West River Land, Ma Han and Liu Jun, came to oppose Liu Bei, but Zhao Yun went out against them while Liu Bei was entertaining Ma Chao at a banquet on the city wall. Ere it had concluded, Zhao Yun slew both the generals and brought their heads to the banquet chamber. This exploit put Ma Chao on his mettle and doubled his respect for the conquerors.

"Let not my lord attack," said Ma Chao. "I will make Liu Zhang surrender of his own accord. Should he resist, my brother Ma Dai and I will take the city and offer it to you with both hands."

Liu Bei was very pleased with the course of events. The day was indeed one of rejoicing.

But Liu Zhang was greatly distressed at the news of his fresh misfortunes, which reached him with the return of his defeated soldiers. He barred the gates and stopped all exits. Before long came news of the approach of Ma Chao with an army of rescue. The Imperial Protector then ventured to mount the walls, and soon Ma Chao and Ma Dai rode up and stood below the ramparts.

Ma Chao called out, "I wish to speak with Liu Zhang." Then Liu Zhang showed himself, and Ma Chao plunged into the matter without more

ado. "I took the leadership of Zhang Lu's army to rescue Yizhou, little thinking that, under the calumnious advice of Yang Song, Zhang Lu would try to slay me. However, now I have gone over to the side of Liu Bei, the Imperial Uncle, and advise you, Sir, to do the same, you and all your officers. Thereby you will all escape harm. If anyone holds on a misguided course, I shall take the city."

Such words came as a shock, and Liu Zhang paled. His feelings overcame him, and he swooned.

When he came to his senses, he muttered, "I am stupid and I am sorry. Better open the gates and end it. The city will be saved."

"No, no," cried Dong He. "There are thirty thousand good soldiers in the city and ample money and stores for a year to come. Hold out!"

But Liu Zhang was broken, saying, "My father and I have ruled Shu for twenty years and have done no particular good for the people. We have fought for three years: the grass has been stained with the blood of my people. The fault is mine. I could not bear it, and so I see no better way than to surrender, whereby I may bring peace to the people."

Those about him wept. One man spoke, saying, "You speak as Heaven guides you."

Turning toward him they recognized a man of Baxi named Qiao Zhou, who had the reputation of being an astrologer.

"I have studied the aspect of the heavens and a multitude of stars gathered over the west, one of which shone as the full moon: a right royal star. And I recall a popular couplet of last year:

"When comes the ruler from the east,
Then may you on new rice feast.

“None can withstand the decree of the Most High.”

Liu Ba and Huang Quan, who heard these words, were very angry at such a speech and rose up, swords in hand, to smite the speaker. But Liu Zhang stayed them.

Next came news that Xu Jing, the Governor of the Shu District, had climbed the wall and gone over to the invaders. This was the last blow. Liu Zhang went home weeping.

Next day, they reported that Liu Bei, the Imperial Uncle, had sent Jian Yong as legate to visit Liu Zhang and he was even then at the city gate. Jian Yong was admitted, and he entered, riding in a carriage and looking about him most haughtily.

Suddenly he was hailed from the street by a man with a sword in his hand, who cried, “You have got your wish, wretched creature, and you seem to think there is no one to compare with you. But do not look so contemptuously at us of Shu!”

Jian Yong quickly got out of his carriage to speak to the speaker, who was a man of Mianzhu named Qin Mi.

“Worthy brother,” said Jian Yong, “I did not recognize you. I pray you not to be angry.”

Both then went to visit Liu Zhang, and they spoke of the liberality and broad-mindedness of Liu Bei, said he had no intention to harm anyone, and praised him to such effect that Liu Zhang then and there made up his mind finally that he would give up the struggle. So he treated Jian Yong very honorably that day.

And the next day, taking his seal and insignia of office and his archives, he accompanied Jian Yong out of the city and went to Liu Bei’s camp. Liu Bei came out in person to receive him.

Taking Liu Zhang by the hand, Liu Bei wept, saying, "It is not that I wish to act cruelly or wrongly. I am the victim of circumstances and cannot help it."

They entered the camp together, where the seal of office and the documents changed hands. Afterwards, they rode into the city side by side. The people gave Liu Bei a cordial welcome, burning incense and illuminating the city. The victor went to the residence of the chief of the region, where he took his seat and was saluted by all the subordinate officials.

However, Huang Quan and Liu Ba stayed away from the ceremony. This annoyed the more violent of Liu Bei's supporters, and they wished to kill the delinquents. But Liu Bei would not allow violence and threatened condign punishment to anyone who might interfere with these two. When the reception was over, Liu Bei went to visit the two recalcitrants, whereupon both came out and made their obeisance.

Said Zhuge Liang to Liu Bei, "We have vanquished, and all opposition in Yizhou is at an end. But there cannot be two rulers, so you must remove Liu Zhang to Jingzhou."

"But I do not wish to exile him," said Liu Bei.

"He lost his prestige through weakness. If you are weak and undecided, you also will not last long."

Liu Bei saw his advice was good, and so he gave a great banquet whereat he begged Liu Zhang to pack up his treasures and prepare to move. He gave the dispossessed Imperial Protector the title General Who Spreads Prestige. Liu Zhang went away to Gong'an in Jingzhou, taking with him his family and all his possessions.

Liu Bei thus became Imperial Protector of Yizhou. He conferred gifts on the civil and military officers who joined him, confirming their ranks and titles. Yan Yan was made General of the Front Army; Fa Zheng, Governor of the Shu District; Dong He and Xu Jing, Imperial Commanders; Liu Ba, General of the Left Army; Huang Quan, General of the Right Army; Wu Yi, Fei Guan, Peng Yang, Zhuo Ying, Li Yan, Wu Lan, Lei Tong, Li Hui, Zhang Yi, Qin Mi, Qiao Zhou, Lu Yin, Huo Jun, Deng Zhi, Yang Hong, Zhou Qun, Fei Yi, Fei Shi, Meng Da, and other Shu officers whose aid had been conspicuous were given high ranks and finer titles under the new rule, and the total of more than sixty of them were well-rewarded.

Naturally, honors were distributed freely to Liu Bei's immediate helpers, to whose efforts he owed his position. Zhuge Liang was held Directing Instructor; Guan Yu, General Who Destroys Rebels and Lord of Hanshou; Zhang Fei, General Who Subdues Rebels and Lord of Xin; Zhao Yun, General Who Guards the West; Huang Zhong, General Who Conquers the West; Wei Yan, General Who Wages Successful War; Ma Chao, General Who Pacifies the West. Sun Qian, Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, Ma Liang, Ma Su, Jiang Wan, Yi Ji, Liu Feng, Guan Ping, Liao Hua, Zhou Cang, and others, many of whom had come to Liu Bei from Jingzhou, received promotions and rewards.

In addition, a special gift of five hundred ounces of gold, a thousand ounces of silver, much copper money, and a thousand rolls of Xichuan silk, was sent to Guan Yu. And all the military and civil officers were given appointments and rewards. Huge numbers of oxen and horses were slaughtered for banquets to the army, and the contents of the granaries were given to the common people. So that there were great rejoicings.

Yizhou being settled, Liu Bei next desired to confiscate the lands of the more famous of the inhabitants about Capital Chengdu and divide them among his officers.

But here Zhao Yun and others dissuaded him, saying, "The sufferings of the people have been severe and losses great. It would be wise policy to let them settle down to their occupations as soon as possible. It would be wrong to reward our own people at the expense of these people."

Liu Bei listened and gave in with good grace.

To Zhuge Liang, Liu Bei assigned the revision of the laws, in which the punishments were to be made, on the whole, heavy.

Then Fa Zheng spoke up, "The founder of Han, Liu Bang, drew up three chapters of law, and the people were all profoundly affected by his virtue. I would rather that the laws be few and liberal that people may be comforted."

Zhuce Liang replied, "You only look at one side. The laws of Qin were fiercely cruel and provoked resentment among the people. It was fitting that the Supreme Ancestor should temper them with kindness. Under the weak administration of Liu Zhang, there has never been an efficient government, and there is a lack of respect for the law. The proper relationship between ruler and minister has been gradually obscured. Favor has been the means of rising, and the highest in rank have been the basest. Kindness has been extended into license, and the most benefited have been the most contemptuous. And thereby have crept in many evils.

"Now I mean to inculcate respect for the dignity of the law, and kindness shall follow its attainment; there shall be moderation in conferring rank, but honor shall really follow on such promotion. In the mutual cooperation of kindness and honor and in proper distinction between superiors and inferiors lies the efficiency of a government."

Fa Zheng had no argument to oppose.

In due time, all became perfectly tranquil, and all the forty-one counties, with their respective garrisons, were peaceful and contented.

As Governor of the Shu District, Fa Zheng earned much hatred, busying himself in returning favors and avenging past deeds, however small they were. One person told of the complaints to Zhuge Liang, urging his reproof.

But Zhuge Liang referred to his meritorious services, saying, "When our lord was in Jingzhou, fearful of Cao Cao on the north and trembling lest he be attacked from the east by Sun Quan, it was Fa Zheng who supported him, gave him directions, and added wings to him so that he could soar this high. In these prosperous days, one can hardly begin to discipline Fa Zheng. Could we reasonably forbid him following somewhat his own way?"

So no investigation was made, but Fa Zheng heard of the complaints and corrected his faults.

One day, when Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang were resting and at leisure, Guan Ping arrived with a letter from his father, thanking his elder Brother for the handsome gifts.

Making obeisance and handing in his letter, Guan Ping said, "My father was anxious to come into Yizhou to try conclusions with Ma Chao."

Said Liu Bei, "If he were to come and fight, I fear they would not both survive."

“There is nothing to be anxious about,” said Zhuge Liang. “I will write to Guan Yu.”

Liu Bei feared that his Brother’s impulsive temperament might lead to trouble, so he told Zhuge Liang to compose a letter and send back by Guan Ping.

When Guan Ping came again to his father, the first question was, “Did you mention the contest with Ma Chao?”

Then the letter was produced, and this is what it said:

“I hear you are anxious to decide whether of the twain, Ma Chao or yourself, is the better man. Now I can measure Ma Chao. He may be unusually brave and bold, but he is only of the class of Ying Bu and Peng Yue of old. He might be a worthy rival of your younger Brother, but he is far from the standard set by you, O Lord of the Beautiful Beard. You have a most important charge. If you come into the West River Land, and Jingzhou should be lost, would you not be guilty of a terrible failure? I think you will see this.”

Guan Yu stroked his long beard and smiled as he read the letter.

“The Instructor knows me thoroughly,” said he to himself.

He showed the letter to his clients and friends and thought no more of going westward.

The successes of Liu Bei in the west had been duly noted by Sun Quan, who thought he was surely now going to obtain the much-coveted Jingzhou. So he called in Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong to ask advice.

Sun Quan said, “When Liu Bei occupied Jingzhou temporarily, he pledged he would return the region to the South Land when he would possess Yizhou. Now he has taken the forty-one counties of the West River Land. If Jingzhou is not returned, I will take it by force.”

Zhang Zhao said, “I have already a scheme that will need no fighting. Liu Bei will offer the place to you with both hands.”

In Shu there shine new sun and moon,
Wu dreams Jingzhou will be his soon.

We shall see in the next chapter the scheme to recover the much-desired region.



END OF ACT XV

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XVI:

THE PRINCE OF WEI:

CAO CAO'S ACCESSION

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVI

CHAPTER 66

ARMED WITH SWORD, GUAN YU GOES TO A FEAST ALONE; FOR THE
STATE, EMPRESS FU OFFERS HER LIFE.

The scheme, which Zhang Zhao had in mind, he laid before his master thus: “The one man upon whom Liu Bei relies most is Zhuge Liang. Now his brother is in your service and in your power. All you have to do is to seize Zhuge Jin’s family and send him west to see Zhuge Liang and make Zhuge Liang persuade Liu Bei to return Jingzhou. If Liu Bei refuses, the family of Zhuge Jin will suffer, and Zhuge Liang will not be able to resist the claims of brotherhood.”

“But Zhuge Jin is a loyal and true gentleman. I could not lay hands upon his family!” said Sun Quan.

“Explain the ruse to him. That will set his mind at rest,” said Zhang Zhao.

Sun Quan consented and issued the command to confine the family of his retainer in the palace but not really imprison them. Then he wrote a letter for Zhuge Jin to take with him on his mission. Before many days, Zhuge Jin reached Chengdu and sent to inform Liu Bei of his arrival.

Liu Bei at once sought the advice of Zhuge Liang.

“Why think you your brother has come?”

“He has come to force the return of Jingzhou.”

“How shall I answer him?”

“You must do so and so,” said Zhuge Liang.

The plan of action being prepared, Zhuge Liang went out of the city to welcome his brother. But instead of taking him to his own residence, Zhuge Liang took him to the guesthouse. When the greetings were over, the visitor suddenly lifted up his voice and wept.

“If you have any trouble, my brother, pray tell. Why do you weep thus?” asked Zhuge Liang.

“Alas! My family is lost!” cried he.

“I suppose it is in the matter of the return of Jingzhou? If your family has been seized on my account, how can I bear it calmly? But do not be anxious, my brother. I shall certainly find some way out of the difficulty.”

This reply pleased Zhuge Jin, and the two brothers went to visit Liu Bei.

The letter from Sun Quan was presented, but when Liu Bei had read it, he said angrily, “He is related to me by marriage, and he has profited by my absence from Jingzhou to steal away his sister. That is a sort of kindness I find hard to bear. When I am just going to lead my army to the South Land to take vengeance, is it likely he will get Jingzhou out of me?”

At this point Zhuge Liang prostrated himself, weeping, at his lord’s feet and said, “The Marquis of Wu has seized my brother’s family, and he will put them all to death if the land be not given up. Can I remain alive if such a fate befall them? I pray my lord for my sake to give back the region and prevent any breach between my brother and me.”

But Liu Bei refused. He seemed obdurate, but Zhuge Liang persisted in his entreaty. Finally, Liu Bei reluctantly consented.

“Since things are so, and the Instructor pleads for it, I will return half,” said he. “I will give up three territories: Changsha, Lingling, and Guiyang.”

“Then, as you have consented, prepare letters ordering Guan Yu to yield these three territories,” said Zhuge Jin.

Liu Bei said, “When you see my Brother, you must use most gracious words to him, for his nature is as a fierce fire, and even I fear what he may do. So be very careful.”

Zhuce Jin, having gotten the letter, took his leave and went straightway to Jingzhou. He asked for an interview and was received in the grand reception hall.

When both were seated in their respective places, the emissary produced the letter of Liu Bei, saying, “The Imperial Uncle has promised to return three territories to my master, and I hope, General, you will hand them over at once and let me return.”

Guan Yu’s countenance changed, and he said, “The Oath sworn in the Peach Garden bound me and my Brother to support the dynasty of Han. Jingzhou is a portion of their domain, so how can any part be given to another? When a leader is in the field, he receives no orders, not even those of his prince. You have brought letters from my Brother, yet will I not yield the territories.”

“But the Marquis of Wu has laid hands upon my family, and they will be slain if the land be not given up. I crave your pity, O General!”

“This is but a ruse on his part, but it does not deceive me!”

“Why are you so pitiless?”

Guan Yu drew his sword, saying, “Let us have no more. This sword is pitiless!”

“It will put the Instructor to shame,” said Guan Ping. “I pray you not to be angry, my father.”

“Were it not for my respect for the Instructor, you would never go back to the South Land,” said Guan Yu to Zhuge Jin.

Zhug Jin, overwhelmed with shame, took his leave, sought his ship, and hastily returned to Chengdu to see his brother. But Zhuge Liang had gone away upon a journey. However, he saw Liu Bei and related what had happened, and said that Guan Yu was going to slay him.

“My Brother is hasty,” said Liu Bei. “It is difficult to argue with him. But return home for the present, and when I have finished my conquest of Hanzhong, I will transfer Guan Yu to another post, and then I may be able to return Jingzhou.”

Zhug Jin had no choice but to accept this reply and carry the unsatisfactory news to his master.

Sun Quan was greatly annoyed and said, “This running to and fro was nothing more than one of your brother’s tricks.”

The unhappy messenger denied, saying, “No, no! Zhuge Liang had interceded with many tears and obtained the promise to return three territories from Liu Bei. It was the obstinacy of Guan Yu that spoiled all.”

“Since Liu Bei said he would return three territories, we may send officials to take over their administration. Think you that might be done?” said Sun Quan.

“What you say, my lord, seems most proper.”

The family of Zhug Jin were restored to liberty, and officers were sent to take charge of the three territories of Changsha, Lingling, and Guiyang.

But they quickly returned, saying, “Guan Yu would have none of us, but had chased us away at once with threats to kill us if we did not hasten!”

Sun Quan then summoned Lu Su and laid the blame on him. "You are Liu Bei's guarantor in this matter. How can you sit quietly looking on while Liu Bei fails to perform his contract?" said Sun Quan.

"I have thought out a plan and was just going to impart it to you," said Lu Su.

"And what is your plan?"

Lu Su said, "There is a camp at Lukou. Invite Guan Yu to a banquet there and try to persuade him. If he still remains obstinate, have some assassins ready to slay him. Should he refuse the banquet, then we must try conclusions with an army."

"This suits me," said Sun Quan, "and it shall be done."

"It should not be done!" interrupted Kan Ze. "The man is as bold as a tiger and not at all like common humans. The plan will fail and result in more harm."

"Then when may I expect to get my Jingzhou?" asked Sun Quan angrily.

Sun Quan ordered Lu Su to carry out his plan, and Lu Su went to Lukou forthwith and settled the preliminaries of the banquet with Lu Meng and Gan Ning. The place selected was by the river. Then Lu Su wrote a letter and found a persuasive person to deliver it. The messenger set out and sailed across the river to the post, where he was received by Guan Ping, who conducted him to his father.

"As Lu Su invites me, I will come tomorrow. You may return," was Guan Yu's reply.

After the messenger had gone, Guan Ping said to his father, "Why did you promise to go? I think Lu Su means you no good."

“Do you think I do not know? This has all come out of my refusal to yield those three territories. They are going to try coercion at this banquet. If I refuse, they will think I fear them. I will go tomorrow in a small ship with just my ten personal guards, and we shall see whether Lu Su will dare to come near me.”

“But, Father, why risk your priceless self in the very den of a tiger? I think you are not giving due importance to my Uncle’s charge.”

“I have been in the midst of a million blades and arrows, yet I rode through it like traveling through a meadow of no one. Think you that I shall begin to show fear of a few such rats as those?”

Nor was the son alone in remonstrance. Ma Liang also warned his chief.

“Although Lu Su has a great reputation, now he is pushed hard. He certainly is badly disposed toward you, and you must be careful, General.”

Guan Yu replied, “I have given my word, and shall I withdraw from it? In the days of the Warring States, Lin Xiangru of the state of Zhao had not the force even to bind a chicken, yet in the assembly at Shengchi Lake, he regarded not the prince and the ministers of the powerful state of Qin, but did his duty without fear of consequences. Have I not learned to face any number of foes? I cannot break my promise.”

“If you must go,” said Ma Liang, “at least go prepared.”

“Tell my son to choose out ten fast ships and five hundred good marines and be in readiness to help me at need. And when he sees a red flag waved, he can come over to my aid.”

The order was given, and the little squadron was made ready.

The messenger returned to his master and told him that Guan Yu had boldly accepted the invitation, and Lu Su and Lu Meng took counsel together.

“What do you think of this?” asked Lu Su.

“If Guan Yu comes with a force, Gan Ning and I will be in readiness for him by the riverside, and you will hear our bomb as a signal that we are attacking. If he has no force with him, the assassins can set on during the banquet.”

Next day, a lookout was kept on the bank, and early in the day, a single ship came along. It was manned by very few men, and a simple, red flag flew out on the breeze showing but one word, “Guan.” Presently they could see him, a handsome figure in a green robe and navy-blue turban. Beside him stood Zhou Cang, his sword-bearer, and near him were eight or nine fine-looking men, each with a sword at his side.

Guan Yu landed and was received by the trembling Lu Su, who conducted him to the hall, bowed his greetings, and led him to the banquet chamber. When Guan Yu drank to his host, Lu Su dared not raise his eyes; Guan Yu was perfectly composed.

When they had become mellow with wine, Lu Su said, “I have a word to say to you, Sir, if haply I may have your attention. You know that your illustrious Brother, the Imperial Uncle, made me surety with my master that Jingzhou would be returned after Yizhou had been taken. Well, now that country is in his possession, but Jingzhou is still unreturned. Is not this a breach of good faith?”

“This is a government affair,” said Guan Yu. “Such matters should not be introduced at a banquet.”

“My master only has petty possessions in the east, and he allowed the temporary loan of Jingzhou out of consideration for the need in which you

then were. But now you have Yizhou, and Jingzhou should be given up. The Imperial Uncle has even yielded three territories, but you, Sir, seem unwilling to let them go. This seems hard to explain on reasonable grounds.”

Guan Yu replied, “After the Red Cliffs, my Brother braved the arrows and the stones in the battle at Wuling and with all his strength drove back the enemy. Did he get a single foot of land for all his efforts? Now you come to force this place out of him.”

“No, I do not,” said Lu Su. “But at the time that you and your Brother suffered defeat at Dangyang, when you were helpless and in the greatest straits, fugitives you knew not whither, then my master was moved with pity and did not grudge the land. So he gave your Brother a foothold whence he might be able to accomplish other ends. But your Brother has presumed upon long-suffering. He has attained his end—the country of his desire—and still he occupies Jingzhou. Such greed and such treachery will make the whole world laugh him to shame, as you know quite well.”

“All that is no affair of mine; it is my Brother’s. I cannot yield the land.”

“I know that by the Oath in the Peach Garden you Three were to live or die together. But your Brother has consented to yield; how are you going to get out of that?”

Before Guan Yu could reply, however, Zhou Cang burst into the conversation, roaring out, “Only the virtuous get hold of territory; does that mean only you people of East Wu?”

Guan Yu’s anger now showed itself. His face changed; he rose in his place, took his sword from his sword-bearer, and said fiercely, “How dare you talk like this at a discussion of state matters? Go! And go quickly!”

Zhou Cang understood. He left the hall, made his way to the river and waved the red call-flag. The ships of Guan Ping darted across like arrows and were ready for action.

The mighty sword in his right hand, Guan Yu laid hold of Lu Su with his left and, simulating intoxication, said, “You have kindly invited me today, Sir, but do not say anything about Jingzhou, for I am so drunk that I may forget our old friendship. Some other day, I hope to invite you to Jingzhou, and then we will talk about that matter.”

Poor Lu Su’s soul almost left his body with fright as he was led down to the riverbank in the grip of his guest. Lu Meng and Gan Ning, whom Lu Su had placed in ambush, dared not act and so made no move lest they should bring about the doom of Lu Su. When they got to the bank, Guan Yu released his host, got on board, and then said farewell. Lu Su stood dumbfounded, staring at the ship, while a fair breeze bore it quickly out of sight.



This episode has been commemorated in verse:

He showed his contempt for the soldiers of Wu
By going alone to their traitor feast;
As Lin Xiangru of old, he was much bolder,
As the Shengchi Lake game was played again.

Guan Yu took his homeward way, while Lu Su and his two confederates talked over what had occurred.

“What can be done now?” said Lu Su.

“The only thing is to tell our master and let him send an army,” replied Lu Meng.

Lu Su sent a messenger to Sun Quan, who, in his wrath, was for sending every available soldier at once against Jingzhou.

But at this crisis, there came news that Cao Cao was raising a huge army with the intention of attacking the South Land. So hasty orders were sent to Lu Su to make no move but to send all the troops he could toward Hefei and Ruxu in the north to repel Cao Cao.

However, Cao Cao did not march south. One of his military advisers, Fu Gan, sent in a memorial against the scheme:

“I, Fu Gan, understand that inspiring fear is the chief consideration in war, as inculcating virtue is in government. These two combined in one person fit him to be a prince. Formerly, in the days of disturbance, you, Illustrious Sir, attacked the rebels and restored tranquility almost everywhere, the only regions unsubdued and not under your control being Wu and Shu. The former of these is protected by the Great River, the latter secured by its mountains, and both difficult to conquer by force of arms.

“My humble opinion is that it is more fitting to increase the authority of civil government, to lay aside arms and rest weapons, to cease from war and train your soldiers until the times shall be favorable. If your mighty legions be now sent to camp on the riverbank and the rebels should take refuge behind their natural defenses, your soldiers will be unable to prove their prowess; should extraordinary strategies be planned, the rebels will not be available. In such a case,

your high prestige would be impaired. I trust, Illustrious Sir, you will deign to examine this.”

After reading this, Cao Cao ceased to think of an expedition against the south. Instead, he established schools and set himself to attract people of ability.

About the same time four of his officers—Wang Can, Du Xi, Wei Kai, and He He—conceived the idea of getting for Cao Cao the honor of “Prince of Wei.”

But Xun You opposed this course, saying, “The Prime Minister’s rank is already that of Duke, and he has received the additional honor of the Nine Dignities, so that his position is extremely high. If he advances to the rank of kingship, it will be inconsistent with reasonableness.”

But Cao Cao was annoyed at this opposition and said, “Does the man wish to emulate Xun Yu?”

When Xun You heard of Cao Cao’s anger, he was grieved and fell ill, so that in a few days he died. He was fifty-eight years of age. Cao Cao had his remains interred honorably, and he stayed his ambition for princely rank.

But there came a day when Cao Cao entered the Palace wearing his sword and made his way to the apartment where the Emperor and the Empress were seated. The Empress rose in a fright, and the Emperor gazed at his minister in terror.

“Sun Quan and Liu Bei have each seized a portion of the empire and no longer respect the court. What is to be done?”

To this abrupt speech, the Emperor replied, “The matter lies within your province.”

Cao Cao answered angrily, "If such a remark be known outside, they will say I treat my prince without respect!"

"If you will help me, I shall be most happy," said His Majesty. "If not, then I trust to your kindness to let me alone."

At this, Cao Cao glared at the Emperor and went out full of resentment.

The courtiers said, "It is said that the Duke of Wei desires to become Prince of Wei, and soon he will aspire to the throne."

Both the Emperor and his consort wept.

Presently, Her Majesty said, "My father, Fu Wan, has long nourished a desire to slay this man. Now I will indite a secret letter to my father to accomplish his end."

"Remember the former attempt with Dong Cheng. The plot was discovered and great misery ensued. I fear that this will leak out also, and both of us will be undone."

Said the Empress, "We pass our days in constant discomfort, like sitting on a rug full of needles. If life is to be like this, one were better dead. But I know one loyal man among the attendants to whom I may entrust the letter. That one is Mu Shun, and he will deliver it."

Thereupon, Empress Fu summoned Mu Shun within, and having sent away all others, they told their distress to the faithful one.

Emperor Xian said, "That fellow Cao Cao desires the dignity of a prince, and soon he will aspire to the throne itself. I, the Emperor, wish to order the father of my consort to make away with the man, but the difficulty is that all the courtiers are his creatures and there is none whom I can trust, save yourself. I desire you to convey this secret letter to Fu Wan. I know your loyalty and am sure you will prove no betrayer."

“I am the recipient of much graciousness for which not even death would prove my gratitude. Thy servant prays that he may be allowed to undertake this.”

The letter was given to Mu Shun, who hid it in his hair, made his way out of the precincts and handed it to its owner. Fu Wan recognized the handwriting of his daughter and read it.

Turning to the messenger, Fu Wan said, “You know the fellow’s creatures are many, and one must act with extreme caution against him. Unless we have the aid of Sun Quan’s and Liu Bei’s armies, Cao Cao will certainly attain his ends. In this matter, we must gain the support of every loyal and faithful one in the court so that within and without there may be a simultaneous attack.”

“Then, O Father of the Empress, write a letter in reply asking for a secret edict, so that we may send to the south and the west to join in the attack.”

So Fu Wan composed a reply, which he gave to Mu Shun to take into the Palace. This time also the letter was concealed in his hair.

But there was a traitor, and Cao Cao heard of the letters. So he waited at a Palace gate for Mu Shun to come out.

“Where are you going?” asked Cao Cao, when Mu Shun appeared.

“The Empress is indisposed and has bidden me call a physician.”

“Where is the summon for the physician?”

“There is no summon.”

Cao Cao bade his guards search Mu Shun, but they did not find the letter.

So he was allowed to go. But just then, a gust of wind blew off his hat, and it struck Cao Cao that that had not been examined. So Mu Shun was

called back. Nothing was found in the hat, but when it was given back Mu Shun put it on with both hands. There was something suspicious about the movement, and Cao Cao bade the searchers examine his hair.

Therein, the letter of Fu Wan was found. Cao Cao read it, which said that Sun Quan and Liu Bei were to be induced to help. The unhappy Mu Shun was taken away into a secret place and interrogated, but he would confess nothing.

That night three thousand soldiers surrounded the dwelling of Fu Wan, who was arrested with all his family. Searching the house, they found the first letter in the handwriting of the Empress. Fu Wan and his family were then consigned to a jail.

At dawn, a party of Imperial Guards, under Chi Lu, bearing ensigns of authority, entered the Forbidden City with orders to take away the seal of the Empress. On the way, they met the Emperor, who asked the reason for a company of armed guards being in the Palace.

“I have orders from the Duke of Wei to get the Empress’s seal,” said Chi Lu.

The Emperor grew alarmed. When Chi Lu reached the apartments of the Empress, she had just risen. Chi Lu ordered to take the seal of the Empress and went away.

As soon as the Empress knew of this, she recognized her danger and hid herself in the hollow walls of her private apartments behind one of the ceremonial halls. She had not been long in hiding when Hua Xin, with a company of five hundred armed soldiers, appeared and asked where she was. The Palace people said they did not know. The red doors of the hall were burst open, and Hua Xin looked in, but he saw no lady there. It occurred to him where she might be hidden, and he ordered his men to

break open the wall. With his own hands, he laid hold of the lady's hair and dragged her forth.

"Spare my life!" pleaded she.

"You may say what you have to say to the Duke!" cried he.

She pulled down her hair and kicked off her shoes, but a couple of soldiers pushed her along in front of them outside.

It may be said here that this Hua Xin had a reputation for learning. He and two others, Bing Yuan and Guan Ning, all good friends, made a little coterie which was known as "The Dragon." Hua Xin was the "head"; Bing Yuan, the "belly"; and Guan Ning, the "tail."

One day, Guan Ning and Hua Xin were hoeing in their garden to grow some vegetables, when they turned up an ingot of gold. Guan Ning went on with his labors without giving a second glance at the find, but Hua Xin picked it up. After regarding it a moment, he threw it away again.

Another day, Guan Ning and Hua Xin were reading together, when there arose a great shouting outside the window of the study. A minister from the Palace was passing. Guan Ning took no notice, but kept his eyes on his book; Hua Xin rose and went to the window. For this, Guan Ning despised his companion, and the two parted for good.

Sometime after, in the disturbance of the empire, Guan Ning fled into Liaodong, where he led the life of hermit. He wore a white cap and lived in the upper part of a house, never touching the ground with his feet. He would have nothing to do with Cao Cao and would not enter his service.

But Hua Xin led a totally different life. For a time he was with Sun Quan; then he went over to Cao Cao and served him. And here he is found

actually laying hands upon the Empress.



His conduct in this particular is the subject of a poem:

That was a dastardly thing that Hua Xin did,
When he broke down the wall where the Empress hid
And dragged her forth by the hair.
He lent his aid to a foul, foul crime
And execrations throughout all time,
Have been, and shall be, his share.

A poet also wrote concerning Guan Ning:

East of Liaodong, so stories tell
Is Guan Ning's tower, where long he dwelt.
Ignoble wealth was Hua Xin's quest,
The hermit's simple life was best.

As Hua Xin hurried the unhappy woman out of the hall, the Emperor saw her. He went over and clasped her to his bosom, weeping.

Hua Xin tried to force her onward, saying, "The Duke of Wei ordered no delay!"

"My doom is sealed," wept the Empress.

"And I know not when my turn will come," sighed the Emperor.

The soldiers hustled the Empress onward, leaving His Majesty beating his breast in despair.

“Can it be that such things happen in the world?” cried the Emperor to Chi Lu, who stood by. And the Emperor swooned. Chi Lu made the courtiers pick him up, and they bore him into the Palace.

Meanwhile, the unhappy Empress was taken before Cao Cao.

“I have dealt well with you,” said he angrily, “and you requited me by plotting my murder. It is the death of one of us, I see.”

He ordered the executioners to beat her till she died. After this, he went into the Palace, seized her two sons and had them poisoned. In the evening of the same day, the whole households of Mu Shun and Fu Wan were put to death publicly. Such terrible deeds spread terror everywhere. They happened in the eleventh month of the nineteenth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 214).



As Cao Cao stands first in cruelty,
So stands Fu Wan in loyalty.
A married pair of low estate,
Had not been torn apart by fate.

The Emperor grieved bitterly over the loss of his consort and in his despair refused all food. Cao Cao did not wish him to die of starvation and loneliness, so he proposed his own daughter as consort.

“Be not sad,” said Cao Cao. “Thy servant is no rebel. My daughter is already in your palace as a secondary lady. She is wise and dutiful, fit to be your consort and occupy the first rank.”

Emperor Xian dared not refuse, and therefore at the new year (AD 215), during the time of the festivities, Lady Cao’s name was inscribed on the dynastic rolls as Empress. And no one of the courtiers dared protest.

Wherefore Cao Cao became even more powerful. But it pleased him not to have rivals in the land, so he again thought of subduing Liu Bei and Sun Quan.

Jia Xu proposed, saying, “Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren, who are serving on the frontiers, should be called to give their advice.”

They were sent for, and Cao Ren was the first to arrive. As a relative, he felt he had the right to see the great minister without delay and went directly to the palace.

But it happened that Cao Cao had been drinking heavily, and his faithful henchman, Xu Chu, would not admit the new arrival.

“I am of the family,” said Cao Ren, angry at the hindrance. “Dare you stop me?”

“General, you may be a relative, but here you are but an officer from the frontier. I am of little account, but a duty lies on me here in the palace. Our lord is overcome with wine and asleep, and I dare not allow you to enter.”

The refusal came to Cao Cao’s knowledge, and he commended the loyalty of Xu Chu.

Soon after, Xiahou Dun came and was called to the council.

Xiahou Dun gave his opinion, saying, “The two rivals should be left until Zhang Lu of Hanzhong has been subdued. The great army that can

overcome Zhang Lu will be in condition to attack the West River Land, and it will be conquered without difficulty.”

The advice coincided with Cao Cao’s own idea, and so he prepared an expedition for the west.

By a crime he showed his power over a feeble king;
This done, at once he hastened to destroy his neighbor.

What happened will be told in later chapters.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVI

CHAPTER 67

CAO CAO CONQUERS HANZHONG; ZHANG LIAO TERRORIZES XIAOYAO.

The expedition against the East River Land went out in three divisions. Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He were Leaders of the Van, Cao Cao with his commanders marched in the center, and Cao Ren brought up the rear. Xiahou Dun was in charge of the commissariat.

The spies soon carried the news into Hanzhong, and Zhang Lu called in his brother Zhang Wei to consult how to meet the attack.

Said Zhang Wei, "The strategic point to hold is Yangping Pass, and there should be ten stockades there, with the forest and hills to support them. You, my brother, should make your depot of supplies at Hanning."

Thereupon two generals, Yang Ang and Yang Ren, were sent with Zhang Wei to the Pass, and they built ten stockades.

Soon Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He arrived and learned the Pass had prepared a defense. They camped at a point five miles away. The soldiers were fatigued after the long march, and all lay down to rest without placing proper guards.

Suddenly, the camp was attacked in the rear by Yang Ang and Yang Ren from different points. Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He mounted quickly and tried to beat off the attackers, but the enemy poured in all round, and their army suffered great loss. They returned to the main body to tell of their defeat, and their chief abused them for their want of care.

"Old soldiers like you should have known better and taken precautions against a raid of the camp when the enemy knew your troops were

exhausted by a long march.”

Cao Cao even desired to put them to death as a warning, but their fellow officers interceded, and he spared them. Soon Cao Cao himself marched in the van. Then he saw the dangerous and evil nature of the place, with its thick growth of trees. As he knew nothing of the roads and was fearful of an ambush, he returned to his camp.

Calling up his two leaders, Xu Chu and Xu Huang, he said, “Had I known the dangerous nature of the place, I would never have come.”

Xu Chu replied, “The soldiers are here now, my lord, and you cannot recoil before the hardships.”

Next day, Cao Cao, with only Xu Chu and Xu Huang, rode out to reconnoiter the enemy’s camp.

As they rode over the hills, Cao Cao pointed out the position with his whip and said, “It will be very difficult to reduce a place as strong as this.”

Just then there arose a shout in their rear, and a shower of arrows fell about them. Yang Ang and Yang Ren were attacking, and the danger became great.

“Friend Xu Huang, you look after our lord!” cried Xu Chu. “I can hold the enemy.”

Xu Chu galloped out, and the two leaders could not stand Xu Chu and took to flight, while their troops scattered. In the meantime, Xu Huang led his master over the hills. Soon he met an army of soldiers led by Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He, who had heard the sound of fighting and had come to the rescue, and Cao Cao got back safely to camp. The four generals were rewarded.

For fifty days, the two armies held each other at bay without coming to a fight. At the end of this time, orders were given to retire into the camp of

Cao Cao.

“We have not tried the strength of the enemy,” said Jia Xu. “You should not retire, my lord.”

“I see that they are always on the alert,” said Cao Cao. “I am only retiring to put them off their guard. By and by, I will send some light cavalry to attack their rear. I shall defeat them then.”

“Ah! Your skill is unfathomable!” cried Jia Xu.

Three thousand horsemen led by Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He got round behind the Yangping Pass by unfrequented roads, while Cao Cao broke up his camp and led his main body backward.

When Yang Ang heard of the retreat, he thought it would be a good chance to attack.

But Yang Ren opposed it, saying, “Cao Cao is full of ruses. The occasion is unclear. We should not lead an attack.”

Yang Ang was willful and said, “I shall go. You may come or not, as you wish.”

In spite of the protestations of his colleague, Yang Ang marched, taking with him the soldiers of five camps and leaving only a few defenders. The day he set out was very foggy, so that one could hardly see his neighbor’s face, and soon the force got into difficulties and could not advance. They bivouacked on the road.

Now Xiahou Yuan was out with a reconnoitering force behind the hills when they heard the voices of troops and the neighing of horses. In the dense fog, they could see nothing, but fearing an ambush, they hastened to retire. Somehow they lost their way and presently stumbled on the deserted camp of Yang Ang. The few defenders thought their comrades had returned, so they threw open the gates to let the troops of Cao Cao in. They found an

empty camp, and they raised a great blaze, which frightened those few defenders in the other camps so that they fled.

As soon as the fog cleared, Yang Ren came to the rescue. But as Yang Ren and Xiahou Yuan were fighting, Zhang He suddenly appeared and attacked from the rear. Between two armies, Yang Ren forced his way through and quickly fled toward Nanzheng.

By and by, when Yang Ang returned, he found his camp in the possession of Cao Cao's troops. Soon Cao Cao's main army came up, and Yang Ang was between two forces. There seemed no other way but to make a dash for it. Falling in with Zhang He, the two engaged, and Yang Ang fell. Those who escaped carried the news of the disaster to Zhang Wei, who abandoned Yangping Pass and fled.

So the invaders took possession of the Pass, and its late defenders, Zhang Wei and Yang Ren, had to go back and report failure.

Zhang Wei laid the blame on his generals, saying, "The Pass could not be held after its supporting positions had been lost."

Zhang Lu threatened to behead Yang Ren for his failure.

But Yang Ren said, "Yang Ang did not listen to my advice, and the defeat followed. Now I volunteer to make another attack. If I fail to take Cao Cao's head, I will abide by the consequences without protest."

Zhang Lu took his formal pledge to succeed, gave him twenty thousand troops, and sent him away. Yang Ren marched to Nanzheng and made a stockade.

Before Cao Cao made any further advance, he sent Xiahou Yuan, with five thousand troops, to reconnoiter the road, and they fell in with the force led

by Yang Ren. Both sides drew up their battle array. From Yang Ren's side went out one general named Chang Qi to engage Xiahou Yuan. Before the fourth bout was fought, Xiahou Yuan disposed of Chang Qi.

Then Yang Ren set his spear and rode to the front. They two fought near forty bouts and neither could claim victory. Then Xiahou Yuan pretended defeat and fled. The other rushed in pursuit. The fugitive suddenly employed the "swinging-horse stab" and killed his pursuer. Yang Ren's troops ran away.

As soon as Cao Cao knew of the death of Yang Ren, he brought up his army, marched straightway to Nanzheng, and camped.

Zhang Lu became alarmed and called a council.

"I can propose a man able to stand against the best leader of the enemy," said Yan Pu.

"Who is he?" asked Zhang Lu.

"Pang De of Nan'an. Pang De surrendered at the same time as Ma Chao, but could not go with Ma Chao into Yizhou as he was ill. You have treated him generously. He will save you."

Pang De was summoned. He came, and Zhang Lu loaded him with gifts and gave him a force of ten thousand troops with which he marched and camped three miles from the city, near the besieging force. His camp made, Pang De rode out and challenged.

Now Cao Cao, remembering Pang De's boldness at the battle at River Wei Bridge, was desirous of winning the warrior for himself.

So Cao Cao told his generals, saying, "Pang De is a bold general of Xiliang formerly serving under Ma Chao. Though he is now under Zhang Lu, that is not his real wish. I want to win him over. So you should try to weary him by prolonging the fights, and so make him captive."

Wherefore, first rode out Zhang He to answer the challenger. He fought a few bouts and returned. Then Xiahou Yuan did the same thing. So did Xu Huang. Lastly went Xu Chu, who kept up the fight to half a hundred bouts before he retired. Still Pang De showed no signs of fatigue nor of fear, and all those who had fought with him praised his prowess and skill.

“If only I could win him over to my side!” said Cao Cao longingly.

Said Jia Xu, “I know one of Zhang Lu’s subordinates, Yang Song. He is avaricious and open to bribes. You might send him secret presents and get him to slander Pang De to his master so as to weaken Pang De’s position.”

“But how can one get at this man? He is in Nanzheng.”

“In the next battle, pretend defeat, flee, and let Pang De take possession of this camp. Return in the night in force and drive him out, and he must retreat into the city. Let one of our own people with a persuasive tongue mingle with his troops, disguised as one of his soldiers, and so gain entrance into the city.”

A subtle agent was found, and goodly gifts were his in advance, and he was entrusted with a golden breastplate as a bribe. He put it on and over it put on the dress of an ordinary soldier of Hanzhong. And he made his way quietly to a point on the road along which the soldiers of Hanzhong would retreat into the city. There, he waited.

Next day, two parties under Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He were sent to lie in ambush, and Xu Huang was sent to challenge but with orders to be defeated. The scheme went well, and as Pang De came on to smite, Cao Cao’s army retired before Pang De till he found himself at their very camp. And therein he entered and was exceedingly pleased to find fodder and forage in great quantities.

Having sent off a messenger to his chief, Pang De spread a feast in celebration of the victory, and when night came on, they slept. But about the second watch, there was an alarm from three directions, and the camp was threatened by three forces: Xu Chu and Xu Huang attacking in the center, Zhang He from the left, and Xiahou Yuan from the right. It was the night attack arranged by Cao Cao, and Pang De could not make any defense. He got to his horse, cut his way through, and made for the city. With the attackers in close pursuit, Pang De reached the gate, got it opened, and rushed in.

And the false soldier got in amid the confusion. He made his way quickly to Yang Song's residence and saw him.

He told Yang Song, saying, "The Great Prime Minister, Duke of Wei, knows you by reputation and holds you in great esteem. And as a token thereof, he has sent you his golden breastplate and a confidential letter as well."

Yang Song took it all in, read the letter, and said, "I will reply by and by, and the Duke of Wei need feel no anxiety, for I shall find a means of proving my gratitude. You may return."

Soon after, Yang Song went to see Zhang Lu and told him, saying, "Pang De has been defeated because he has been bribed by Cao Cao."

Forthwith, Zhang Lu summoned his general, abused him, and threatened to put him to death. Yan Pu, however, protested and proposed to test Pang De in another encounter.

Zhang Lu then said, "Tomorrow, if you lose, I will take your head!"

Pang De retired full of resentment.

The next day, Cao Cao attacked, and Pang De went out to repel him. Cao Cao sent out Xu Chu but bade him pretend defeat. When Pang De

pursued, Cao Cao rode toward the hills, where he halted and presently got to speak with Pang De.

Cao Cao called out, "Pang De! Why not surrender?"

But Pang De thought within himself that to capture Cao Cao would be a fine exploit, so he boldly faced his escort and rode up the hills. But there arose a great shouting as if heaven and earth were clashing together, and he and his followers went headlong into ditches and pits that had been dug. Out flew Cao Cao's troops with ropes and hooks, and Pang De was a prisoner.

When he was taken to Cao Cao, he was received with the greatest kindness. Cao Cao himself dismounted, loosed the captive's bonds, and asked him, "Do you surrender?"

Pang De thought of the ill treatment he had just received at the hands of his master and of his injustice, and he gave in. At once, Pang De was helped to mount a horse by Cao Cao himself and led to the great camp.

Soldiers placed for the purpose on the city wall saw what happened and reported to Zhang Lu: "Pang De has ridden off on friendly terms with Cao Cao."

Whereby, Zhang Lu was persuaded that Yang Song had spoken truly.

Soon after, scaling ladders were set against the city walls, and catapults threw in great stones.

The danger being imminent, Zhang Wei counseled, saying, "Set all supplies on fire and flee to the Southern Mountains, where we might be able to defend Bazhong."

On the other hand, Yang Song said, "The best course is to throw open the gates and surrender."

Zhang Lu could not decide which to do. His brother, Zhang Wei, maintained that burning everything and flight was the only course.

Zhang Lu said, "I have been always loyal at heart and desired to return to allegiance when circumstances would permit. I have been unable to attain my desire, but now fight seems the only course open to me. However, the granaries and treasures, the public offices, and the government property of all kinds must be kept safe."

So the public buildings were all carefully barred and sealed. The same night, in the late evening, Zhang Lu and his family went out through the south gate and found their way through. Cao Cao let them go unpursued. When Cao Cao entered the city and saw the proofs of Zhang Lu's care of the government property, he compassionated the Governor's misfortunes. He then sent a messenger into Bazhong to induce Zhang Lu to surrender. Zhang Lu was disposed to do so, but his brother would not hear of it. Yang Song wrote a secret letter to Cao Cao urging him to attack and promising treacherous aid.

Cao Cao presently attacked, and Zhang Wei came out to meet him. But his opponent was the mighty Xu Chu, who made short work of him. The beaten soldiers fled back into the city, which Zhang Lu then decided to defend.

As this would not give Yang Song the chance to carry out his treacherous scheme, he persuaded his master, saying, "If we stay passive, death will surely come. My lord should go out and fight the enemy to the end, leaving me to defend the city."

Zhang Lu took this advice, although it was opposed by Yan Pu, and went out. But before his van got near the enemy, his rear ranks began to desert, and Zhang Lu retreated. Cao Cao pursued him to the city walls, where Zhang Lu found the gates shut against him.

“Surrender, O Zhang Lu!” cried Cao Cao.

There being now no way open, Zhang Lu dismounted, prostrated himself, and gave in. Because of this and his care of the public property, Cao Cao treated him with great kindness and consoled him with the title of General Who Guards the South. Yan Pu and many others also were enrolled among the nobles. To each county was appointed a Military Commander, in addition to the Governor. All the soldiers were feasted and rewarded.

Then Yang Song, who had sold his master, came and sued for honors. He was condemned to public execution and exposure.



Selling one's lord may make great service,
But the gains thereof are vanity;
No glory clings to his house but a shameful death,
Wherefore Yang Song is an object of contempt
forever.



When the East River Land was quite subdued, First Secretary Sima Yi said, “The people of Shu are not loyal to Liu Bei because of his uprooting of the late ruler, Liu Zhang. If on the strength of your present success, you press forward, Liu Bei will become as a shattered tile. The wise person takes the occasion when it serves, and this should not be missed.”

Cao Cao sighed, “There is no end—as human want has no limit: now that I have Hanzhong, I am forced into taking Yizhou.”

Liu Ye supported his colleague, saying, “Sima Yi spoke well. If you delay, Zhuge Liang will have become top minister, while Guan Yu, Zhang

Fei, and the other bold warriors will be at the head of the army. If the people of Shu settle down, and the points of vantage are held, you will not be able to overcome them.”

Cao Cao replied, “My soldiers have marched far and suffered much. Beside, we must show pity.”

Wherefore he rested his army for a time.

Meanwhile, the populace of Yizhou, having heard of Cao Cao’s success in the East River Land, concluded that the West River Land would suffer next, and fear spread among them. Whereupon, Liu Bei called in the Directing Instructor and asked his advice.

Zhuge Liang replied, “I can make Cao Cao retreat of his own accord.”

“What is that plan?”

“A part of Cao Cao’s army is camped at Hefei from fear of Sun Quan. If now we restore three territories of Jingzhou—Changsha, Jiangxia, and Guiyang—and send a specious person to talk, we can make Sun Quan attack Hefei, which will lead to Cao Cao going southward and not looking to the west.”

“Who is a fit person for the messenger?” said Liu Bei.

And Yi Ji replied, “I will go.”

Liu Bei, well-satisfied, wrote letters and prepared gifts, with which Yi Ji went, calling in at Jingzhou City on the way to tell Guan Yu. Then he went on to the capital city of Jianye and saw Sun Quan.

After the greetings, Sun Quan asked, “On what business do you come?”

Yi Ji replied, "On a former occasion, Zhuge Jin would have had the three territories of Changsha, Lingling, and Guiyang but for the absence of the Directing Instructor, which prevented the actual transfer. Now I am the bearer of letters giving Changsha, Guiyang, and Jiangxia back to you. Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang wanted to restore all the territories of Jingzhou, including those of Xiangyang, Nanjun, and Lingling. But now that Cao Cao has got possession of East River Land, there is no place for General Guan Yu. Hefei is weak, and we hope you will attack it so as to make Cao Cao withdraw to the south and let my master take the East River Land, when he will restore the whole of the Jingzhou Region."

"Go back to the guesthouse, and let me take counsel in this matter," said Sun Quan.

As soon as Yi Ji had gone, the Marquis of Wu turned to his officers and asked what should be done.

Zhang Zhao said, "All this is because Liu Bei fears that Cao Cao will attack him. However, since Cao Cao is absent in Hanzhong, it would be well to seize the opportunity and attack Hefei."

Sun Quan accepted the advice. After he had sent the messenger away, he began to prepare for the expedition. He left Lu Su in command over the three territories of Changsha, Jiangxia, and Guiyang. Then Sun Quan encamped at Lukou, withdrew Generals Lu Meng and Gan Ning, and sent to Yuhang for General Ling Tong.

In a few days, Lu Meng and Gan Ning returned.

Lu Meng suggested a plan, saying, "Cao Cao has sent Zhu Guang, Governor of Lujiang, to camp at the city of Huancheng and plant grain for the supply of Hefei. Let us first take Huancheng and then attack Hefei."

"This scheme is just after my own heart," said Sun Quan.

So Sun Quan appointed Lu Meng and Gan Ning as Van Leaders; Jiang Qin and Pan Zhang as Rear Guards; he himself with Zhou Tai, Chen Wu, Dong Xi, and Xu Sheng commanded the center. But the Commanders Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang were not called to take part in this expedition, as they were guarding certain especial places.

The army crossed the river and captured Hezhou on the way. Governor Zhu Guang sent an urgent message to Hefei for help and set himself to strengthening his fortifications for a siege.

Sun Quan went very near the city walls of Huancheng to observe its defense, and a flight of arrows greeted him, some striking his great official parasol. He went back to camp and asked his officers to offer plans of attack.

Then Dong Xi said, "Pile up great hills of earth and attack from the summits."

Said Xu Sheng, "Set up long ladders and construct platforms whence you can look over the city walls and thus attack."

But Lu Meng said, "All such plans need a long time to prepare, and in the meantime the soldiers of Cao Cao will arrive from Hefei. Do not try such long-drawn-out schemes, but take advantage of the fine, fresh spirit of our newly arrived troops and attack impetuously. Their elan will carry the wall. If you attack tomorrow at dawn, the city will fall before noon."

So the early meal was taken at the fifth watch, and the army went to the attack. The defenders sent down showers of arrows and stones. Gan Ning took an iron chain in his hand and climbed up the wall. They shot at him with bows and crossbows, but he turned aside the arrows and bolts, and he threw the chain round Governor Zhu Guang to pull him down. Lu Meng beat the drum for the attack. The soldiers made a rush forward to climb the

wall, and they slew Zhu Guang. His officers and soldiers gave in, and so Huancheng fell to Sun Quan.

It was still a long time to noon.

In the meantime, Zhang Liao was marching to the aid of the city. Halfway, he heard that the city had fallen, and so he returned to Hefei.

Soon after the conqueror's entry into Huancheng, Ling Tong came there with his army. The next few days were devoted to feasting the army. Special rewards were given to the two generals who had done such good work at the capture. At the banquet to the officers, Gan Ning was seated in the seat of honor, which his colleague, Lu Meng, readily yielded to him for his late prowess.

But as the cup of felicitation was passing round, Ling Tong's thoughts turned to the enmity he bore Gan Ning for having slain his father, and the praises which Lu Meng now heaped upon Gan Ning filled Ling Tong's heart with bitterness. For some time, he glared savagely at Gan Ning, and then he determined on revenge.

Drawing his sword, Ling Tong suddenly rose to his feet and cried, "There is nothing to amuse the assembly. I will give them a display of swordsmanship!"

Gan Ning quickly saw his real intention. He pushed back his table and laid hold of a halberd in each hand, crying, "And you may also watch an adept in the use of this weapon!"

Lu Meng saw the evil meaning of both, and assuming his sword and shield, he hastily stepped between the two warriors, saying, "Neither of you gentlemen is so dexterous as I."

So he forced the two combatants asunder, while someone ran to tell Sun Quan. The Marquis hastily jumped into the saddle and rode to the banquet hall. At sight of their lord, they all three lowered their weapons.

“I have bidden you two to forget this old enmity,” said Sun Quan. “Why do you revive it today?”

Ling Tong prostrated himself in tears. Sun Quan exhorted him to forget his quarrel, and once again there was peace.

The next day, the army set out for Hefei.

Because of the loss of Huancheng, Zhang Liao grieved greatly. Cao Cao had sent by the hands of Xue Ti a small casket sealed with his own seal and bearing outside the words, “If rebels come, open this.”

So when he received the news of the coming of a powerful army, Zhang Liao opened the casket and read the letter therein:

“If Sun Quan comes to attack Hefei, the two Generals Li Dian and Zhang Liao are to go out to oppose him, and Yue Jin is to be left to guard the walls.”

Zhang Liao sent the letter to the two men named therein.

“What do you think to do?” said Yue Jin.

Zhang Liao replied, “Our lord is away, and Wu is coming to attack for certain. We must go out to repel them and exert ourselves to the utmost to inflict defeat upon their advance guard. Thus we shall appease the fears of the populace, and then we can hold as best we may.”

But Li Dian was silent, for he was ever unfriendly to Zhang Liao.

Then, seeing his colleague inclined to hold off, Yue Jin said, "I am for remaining on the defensive, since the enemy is so much more numerous than we."

"Gentlemen, it seems you are selfish and not devoted to the common weal," said Zhang Liao. "You may have your private reasons for what you do, but I intend to go out and try to repel the enemy. I will fight them to the death."

Thereupon, Zhang Liao bade his servants saddle his steed.

At this, Li Dian's better feelings were aroused, and he rose, saying, "How can I be careless of the common weal and indulge my private feelings? I am ready to follow you and do as you command."

Zhang Liao was elated at this moral victory, and said, "Since I can depend upon your help, my friend, then I would ask you to lie in ambush on the north of Xiaoyao Ford in order to destroy the Xiaoshi Bridge there as soon as the army of Wu has crossed. I, with my friend Yue Jin, will smite the enemy."

Li Dian went away to muster his troops and prepare the ambush.

As has been recorded, the leaders of the advance guard of the southern army were the veterans Lu Meng and Gan Ning. Sun Quan and Ling Tong were in the center; the other generals followed them. The Leaders of the Van met Yue Jin first, and Gan Ning rode out and challenged him. After a few bouts, Yue Jin pretended to be defeated and fled. Gan Ning called to his colleague to join in the pursuit.

When Sun Quan heard that this advance guard had been successful, he hastened his army to Xiaoyao Ford. But then there came a series of

explosions, and up came Zhang Liao and Li Dian, one on each flank. Sun Quan was unprepared for this and sent messengers to call off the pursuit and ask for help from Lu Meng and Gan Ning. Before it could arrived, Zhang Liao had come up. Manifestly, Ling Tong, who had with him only a small troop of three hundred horse, could not long withstand the army of Cao Cao, but he faced them and fought bravely.

Presently, Ling Tong cried to his lord, "Cross the Xiaoshi Bridge and run back, my lord!"

Sun Quan galloped for the bridge, but the southern end had been already broken down and there was a wide breach between the end of the bridge and the shore. Not a single plank was there by which to cross. What could be done? Sun Quan was in a quandary and helpless.

"Go back and jump for it!" yelled one of the generals, Gu Li by name.

Sun Quan did so. Backing his horse some thirty spans or so, he then gave it its head and lashed it with his whip.

The good beast leaped and cleared the chasm, and his master was safe on the southern shore.



Once Dilu leapt across the Tan Torrent wide,
And when defeat did Sun Quan of Wu betide,
And death came threateningly at Xiaoyao Ford,
His steed, too, leapt, and saved him from the sword.



Having reached the farther shore, Sun Quan embarked on one of the boats of Xu Sheng and Dong Xi and was rowed to a place of safety, while Ling Tong and Gu Li were still fighting with Zhang Liao's army. Gan Ning and Lu Meng, coming to their aid, were pursued by Yue Jin, and Li Dian also stayed their progress.

But the soldiers of the South Land fought bravely; half of their force fell, and Ling Tong's troop of three hundred horse perished all, while Ling Tong himself was wounded, but found his way to the bridge. Finding it destroyed, he fled along the stream. Presently, he was seen by Sun Quan from the boat and taken on board by Dong Xi. Gan Ning and Lu Meng also cut their ways back to the southern shore.

The terrible slaughter at this battle put such fear into the minds of the people of the South Land that the name of Zhang Liao kept the very children quiet at night.

When Sun Quan reached his camp, he richly rewarded Ling Tong and Gu Li. Then he led his army back to Ruxu and began to put his ships in order so that the army and navy might act in unison. He also sent home for reinforcements.

Zhang Liao reflected that he had insufficient force to meet another attack if it should be supported by the navy of the South Land, so he sent Xue Ti through the night to carry an urgent message to his master in Hanzhong. When the messenger arrived, Cao Cao saw that his western expedition would have to yield to the urgency of home defense. However, he called in his counselors and put a direct question to them.

“Can we take the West River Land now or not?”

“Shu is too well prepared; we cannot,” replied Liu Ye. “It is better to go to the succor of Hefei, and then go down the river to take the South Land.”

Wherefore, leaving Xiahou Yuan to station at Dingjun Mountain to guard Hanzhong, and Zhang He to keep Mount Mengtou Pass, Cao Cao broke up his camp and went toward Ruxu with all his commanders.

The armored horsemen had conquered Hanzhong.

The ensigns toward the south were turned again.

The subsequent course of the war will be unfolded in later chapters.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVI

CHAPTER 68

GAN NING'S HUNDRED HORSEMEN RAID THE NORTHERN CAMP; ZUO CI'S FLUNG-DOWN CUP FOOLS CAO CAO.

Sun Quan was occupied with ordering his army at Ruxu when he heard of the coming of Cao Cao from Hanzhong with four hundred thousand troops to the relief of Hefei. He told off a fleet of fifty large ships to lie in the port, while Chen Wu went up and down the riverbanks on the lookout.

"It would be well to inflict a defeat upon Cao Cao's army before they recover from the long march. It would dishearten them," said Zhang Zhao.

Looking around at the officers in his tent, Sun Quan said, "Who is bold enough to go forth and fight this Cao Cao and so take the keen edge off the spirit of his army?"

And Ling Tong offered himself, saying, "I will go!"

"How many soldiers do you require?"

"Three thousand troops will suffice," replied Ling Tong.

But Gan Ning struck in, saying, "Only a hundred horsemen would be needed. Why send three thousand?"

Ling Tong was angry, and he and Gan Ning began to wrangle even in the presence of their chief.

"Cao Cao's army is too strong to be attacked recklessly," said Sun Quan.

Finally he gave the commission to Ling Tong with his three thousand, bidding him reconnoiter just outside Ruxu and fight the enemy if he met

him.

Marching out, Ling Tong very soon saw a great cloud of dust, which marked the approach of an army. As soon as they came near enough, Zhang Liao, who led the van, engaged with Ling Tong, and they fought half-a-hundred bouts without sign of victory for either. Then Sun Quan began to fear for his champion, so he sent Lu Meng to extricate Ling Tong from the battle and escort him home.

When Ling Tong had come back, his rival Gan Ning went to Sun Quan and said, "Now let me have the hundred horsemen, and I will raid the enemy's camp this night. If I lose a soldier or a mount, I will claim no merit."

Sun Quan commended his courage and chose a hundred of his best veterans, whom he placed under Gan Ning's command for the raid. Sun Quan also gave him as a feast for the soldiers fifty flasks of wine and seventy five pounds of mutton.

Returning to the tents, Gan Ning drew up his little force and made them sit down in rows. Then he filled two silver goblets with wine and solemnly drank to them.

Next, he said, "Comrades, tonight our orders are to raid the camp of the enemy. Wherefore, fill your goblets and call up all your strength for the task."

But the men did not welcome his words. Instead they looked one at another, uncertain.

Seeing them in this mood, Gan Ning adopted a fierce tone, drew his sword and cried, "What are you waiting for? If I, a leader of rank, can risk my life, cannot you?"

Moved by the angry face of the leader, the men rose, bowed their heads, and said, "We will fight to the last!"

Then the wine and meat were distributed to them and each one ate his fill. The second watch was chosen as the hour to start, and each man stuck a white goose plume in his cap whereby they could recognize each other in the darkness.

At the time appointed, they buckled on their armor, mounted, and galloping away, quickly came to Cao Cao's camp. Hastily throwing aside the thorny barriers, they burst in with a yell that rose to the very heavens. They made straight for the center, hoping to slay Cao Cao himself. But the troops of the leader's brigade had made a rampart of their carts within which they were sheltered as if in an iron tun, so that the raiders failed to find a way in.

However, Gan Ning and his small force dashed hither and thither, cutting and slashing, till Cao Cao's men were quite bewildered and frightened. They had no notion of the number of their assailants. All their efforts only increased the confusion. Wherefore the hundred men had it all their own way and rushed from point to point, slaying whomever they met. But soon the drums beat in every camp and torches were lit and shouts arose, and it was time for the raiders to get away.

Gan Ning led his little body of troops out through the south gate with never a soldier trying to stop him, and rode for his own camp. He met Zhou Tai, who had been sent to help him in case of need, but the need had not arisen, and the hundred heroes with their leader rode back in triumph. There was no pursuit.



A poem was written praising this exploit:

The drums of war make earth to shake.
When the South Land comes near, even devils quake.
People long will tell of that night raid
That Gan Ning's goose-plumed warriors made.



On his return, Gan Ning took the tale of his men at the camp gate; not a man nor a horse was missing. He entered to the sound of drum and fife and the shouting of his men.

“Long life!” shouted they, as Sun Quan came to welcome them.

Gan Ning dismounted and prostrated himself.

His lord raised him and took him by the hand, saying, “This expedition of yours must have given those rebels a shaking. I had yielded to your desire only that I wished to give you the opportunity to manifest your valor. I did not wish to let you be sacrificed.”

Gan Ning's exploit was rewarded with gifts, a thousand rolls of silk and a hundred keen swords, all of which he distributed among his soldiers.

Sun Quan was very proud of his subordinate's doughty deed, and said, “Cao Cao may have his Zhang Liao, but I can match him with my friend Gan Ning.”

Soon Zhang Liao came to proffer another challenge, and Ling Tong, impatient at being excelled by his rival and enemy, begged that he might go out to fight. His request was granted, and he marched out a short distance

from Ruxu with five thousand troops. Sun Quan, with Gan Ning in his train, went out to look on at the encounter.

When both armies had come out on the plain and were arrayed, Zhang Liao, with Li Dian and Yue Jin, one on either side, advanced to the front. Ling Tong, sword in hand, galloped out towards him, and at Zhang Liao's command, Yue Jin took the challenge and went to open the combat. They fought half-a-hundred bouts, and neither seemed to have the better of the other.

Then Cao Cao, hearing of the great contest going on, rode up to the battlefield and took position under the great standard whence he could see the fighting. Seeing both combatants were waxing desperate, he thought to decide the struggle by an unfair blow. He bade Cao Xiu let fly a secret arrow, which Cao Xiu did by creeping up under cover of Zhang Liao. It struck Ling Tong's steed, which reared and threw its rider. Yue Jin dashed forward to thrust at the fallen warrior with his spear, but before the blow could be given, the twang of another bow was heard and an arrow speeding by hit Yue Jin full in the face. He fell from his horse. Then both sides rushed forward to rescue their champions. The gongs clanged, and the combat ceased. Ling Tong returned to his camp and reported himself to his master.

"The arrow that saved you was shot by Gan Ning," said Sun Quan.

Ling Tong turned to his rival and bowed low.

"I could not have supposed you would have rendered me such a service, Sir," said he to Gan Ning.

This episode ended the strife and enmity between the two leaders, who thereafter swore perpetual friendship.

On the other side, Cao Cao saw to it that Yue Jin's wound was dressed. Next day, he launched an attack against Ruxu along five different lines. He himself led one army in the center, on the left Zhang Liao and Li Dian led two armies, and on the right Xu Huang and Pang De commanded the other two. Each army was ten thousand strong, and they marched to give battle on the riverbank. The crews and fighting troops of the South Land's naval squadron were greatly frightened by the approach of these armies.

"You have eaten the bread of your prince, and you must give loyal service. Why fear?" said Xu Sheng.

Thereupon, he put some hundreds of his best men into small boats, went along the bank, and broke into the legion under Li Dian. Meanwhile, Dong Xi, on the ships, beat drums and cheered them on. But a great storm came on, lashing the river to fury, and the waves rolled mountains-high. The larger ships rolled as if they would overturn, and the soldiers of Wu were frightened. They started to get down into the bulkier cargo-boats to save their lives. But Dong Xi threatened them with his sword, cutting down some half-score of the mutineers.

"My orders are to hold this point against the enemy," shouted he. "We dare not abandon the ships!"

However, the wind increased, and presently the bold Dong Xi was thrown into the river by the rolling of his ship and was drowned, together with his men.

Xu Sheng dashed hither and thither among Li Dian's army, slaying right and left. Chen Wu, hearing the noise of battle, set out for the riverbank. On his way, Chen Wu met Pang De and the legion under him. A melee ensued. Then Sun Quan with Zhou Tai and his troops joined in.

The small force from the ships that had attacked Li Dian was now surrounded. So Sun Quan gave the signal for an onslaught that should

rescue them. This failed, and Sun Quan was himself surrounded in turn and soon in desperate straits. From a height, Cao Cao saw his difficulties and sent in Xu Chu to cut Sun Quan's column in halves so that neither half could aid the other.

When Zhou Tai had cut an alley out of the press and reached the riverside, he looked for his master. But Sun Quan was nowhere to be seen, so Zhou Tai dashed once again into the battle.

Coming to his own troops, he cried, "Where is our lord?"

They pointed to where the press was most dense. Zhou Tai stiffened and dashed in.

Presently he reached his lord's side and cried out, "My lord, follow me, and I will hack a way out!"

Zhou Tai fought his way out to the riverbank. Then he turned to look, and Sun Quan was not behind him. So he turned back, forced his way in, and once again found his way to his master's side.

"I cannot get out. The arrows are too thick!" said Sun Quan.

"Then go first, my lord, and I will follow!"

Sun Quan then urged his steed as fast as he could go, and Zhou Tai kept off all pursuit. Zhou Tai sustained many wounds and the arrows rattled on his helmet, but he got clear at last and Sun Quan was safe. As they neared the riverbank, Lu Meng came up with some of the naval force and escorted Sun Quan down to the ships.

"I owe my safety to Zhou Tai, who thrice came to my aid," said Sun Quan. "But Xu Sheng is still in the thick of the fight, and how can we save him?"

"I will go to his rescue," cried Zhou Tai.

Whirling his spear, Zhou Tai again plunged into the battle and presently brought his colleague safely out of the press. Both were severely wounded.

Lu Meng ordered his troops to keep up a rapid flight of arrows so as to command the bank, and in this way, the two leaders were enabled to get on board the ships.

Now Chen Wu had engaged the legion under Pang De. Being inferior in force and no aid being forthcoming, Chen Wu was forced into a valley where the trees and undergrowth were very dense. He tried to turn, but was caught by the branches, and while so entangled, he was killed by Pang De.

When Cao Cao saw that Sun Quan had escaped from the battle to the riverbank, he urged his steed forward in pursuit. He sent flights of arrows toward the fugitives.

By this time, Lu Meng's troops had emptied their quivers, and he began to be very anxious. But just then a fleet of ships sailed up led by Lu Xun, the son-in-law of Sun Ce, who came with one hundred thousand marines and drove back Cao Cao's army. Then he landed to pursue. He captured many thousands of horses and slew many men so that Cao Cao was quite defeated and retired. Then they sought and found the body of Chen Wu among the slain.

Sun Quan was much grieved when he came to know that Chen Wu had been slain and Dong Xi drowned, and wept sorely. Men were sent to seek

for Dong Xi's body, which at last was found. Both generals were buried with great honors.

As a recompense for Zhou Tai's services in Sun Quan's rescue, Sun Quan prepared in his honor a great banquet, where Sun Quan himself offered Zhou Tai a goblet of wine and complimented and embraced him while the tears coursed down his cheeks.

"Twice you saved my life, careless of your own," cried Sun Quan, "and you have received many wounds. It is as if your skin had been engraved and painted. What sort of a man should I be if I did not treat you as one of my own flesh and blood? Can I regard you, Noble Sir, merely as a unit in my army? You are my meritorious minister. I share the glory you have won and mine are your joys and sorrows."

Then Sun Quan bade Zhou Tai open his dress and exhibit his wounds for all the assembly to see. The skin was gashed all over as if his body had been scored with a knife. Sun Quan pointed to the wounds, one after another, and asked how each one had been received. And, as Zhou Tai told him, for every wound Sun Quan made him drink off a goblet of wine till he became thoroughly intoxicated. Sun Quan then presented him with a green silk parasol and bade him use it on all occasions as a sign of the glory that was his.

Sun Quan found his opponents too stable. At the end of a month the two armies were both at Ruxu and neither had won a victory.

Then said Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong, “Cao Cao is too strong, and we cannot overcome him by mere force. If the struggle continues longer, you will only lose more soldiers. You had better seek to make peace.”

Sun Quan followed this advice and dispatched Bu Zhi on a peace mission to Cao Cao’s camp. Sun Quan offered a yearly tribute. Cao Cao also saw that the South Land was too strong to be overcome, and consented.

Cao Cao insisted, “The Marquis should first send away his army, and then I would retire.”

Bu Zhi returned with this message, and Sun Quan sent away the greater part of his force, leaving only Zhou Tai and Jiang Qin to hold Ruxu. The army returned to Capital Jianye.

Cao Cao left Cao Ren and Zhang Liao in charge of Hefei, and he marched his army back to Capital Xuchang.

On arrival, all Cao Cao’s officers, military and civil, persuaded him to become Prince of Wei. Only the Chair of the Secretariat, Cui Yan, spoke strongly against the scheme.

“You are, then, the only man who knows not the fate of Xun Yu,” said his colleagues.

“Such times! Such deeds!” cried Cui Yan. “You are guilty of rebellion, but you may commit it yourselves. I will bear no part in it.”

Certain enemies told Cao Cao, and Cui Yan was thrown into prison. At his trial he glared like a tiger, and his very beard curled with contempt. He raged and cursed at Cao Cao for a betrayer of his prince, and a rebel. The interrogating magistrate reported his conduct to Cao Cao, who ordered Cui Yan to be beaten to death in prison.



Cui Yan of Qinghe,
Firm and unyielding was he,
With beard crisp curling and gleaming eyes,
Which showed the man of stone and iron within.
He drove the evil from his presence,
And his glory is fair and high.
For loyalty to his lord of Han,
His fame shall increase as the ages roll.

In the twenty-first year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 216), in the fifth month of that year, a great memorial signed by many officers went up to Emperor Xian, praying:

“The Duke of Wei has rendered so great services that no minister before him, in Heaven as well as on Earth, not even Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou, could match his manifest merits to the state. Thus, the title of kingship should be granted to him.”

The memorial was approved, and a draft edict was prepared by the famous Zhong Yao to make Cao Cao Prince of Wei. Thrice Cao Cao, with seeming modesty, pretended to decline the honor, but thrice was his refusal rejected. Finally he made his obeisance and was enrolled as Prince of Wei with the usual insignia and privileges, a coronet with twelve strings of beads and a chariot with gilt shafts, drawn by six steeds. Using the formalities of the Son of Heaven, he decorated his imperial chariot with

bells and had the roads cleared when he passed along. He built himself a Palace at Yejun.

Then he began to discuss the appointment of an heir-apparent. His principal wife, Lady Ding, was without issue; but a concubine, Lady Liu, had borne him a son, Cao Ang, who had been killed in battle at the siege of Wancheng when Cao Cao fought against Zhang Xiu. A second concubine, Lady Bian, had borne him four sons: Cao Pi, Cao Zhang, Cao Zhi, and Cao Xiong. Wherefore he elevated Lady Bian to the rank of Queen of Wei in place of Lady Ding.

The third son, Cao Zhi, was very clever and a ready master of composition. Cao Cao wished him to be named the heir.

Then the eldest son, Cao Pi sought from High Adviser Jia Xu a plan to secure his rights of primogeniture, and Jia Xu told him to do so and so. Thereafter, whenever the father went out on any military expedition, Cao Zhi wrote fulsome panegyrics, but Cao Pi wept so copiously at bidding his father farewell that the courtiers were deeply affected and remarked that though Cao Zhi was crafty and clever, he was not so sincerely filial as Cao Pi. Cao Pi also bought over his father's immediate attendants, who then rang the praises of his virtues so loud that Cao Cao was strongly disposed to name him as the heir after all.

After hesitating a long time, the matter was referred to Jia Xu.

"I wish to name my heir. Who shall it be?" said Cao Cao.

Jia Xu would not say, and Cao Cao asked why. "I was just recalling the past in my mind and could not reply at once," said Jia Xu.

"What were you recalling?"

"I was thinking of two fathers, Yuan Shao and Liu Biao, and their sons."

Cao Cao laughed. Soon after this, he declared his eldest son his heir.

In the winter of that year, in the tenth month, the building of the Palace of the new Prince of Wei was completed, and the furnishing begun. From all parts were collected rare flowers and uncommon trees to beautify the gardens.

One agent went into the South Land and saw Sun Quan, to whom he presented a letter from Cao Cao asking that he might be allowed to proceed to Wenzhou to get some oranges. At that period, Sun Quan was in a most complaisant mood toward Cao Cao, so from the orange trees in his own city, he picked forty loads of very fine fruits and sent them immediately to Yejun.

On the way, the bearers of the oranges fell tired, and they had to stop at the foot of a certain hill. There came along an elderly man, blind of one eye and lame of one leg, who wore a white rattan headdress and a loose, black robe. He saluted the bearers and stayed to talk.

Presently, he said, "Your burdens are heavy, O Porters. May this old Daoist lend you a shoulder? What do you say?"

Naturally they were pleased enough, and the amiable wayfarer bore each load for two miles. When they resumed their burdens, they noticed that the loads seemed lighter than before, and they felt rather suspicious.

When the Daoist was taking his leave of the officer in charge of the party, he said, "I am an old friend from the same village as the Prince of Wei. My name is Zuo Ci. Among Daoists, I bear the appellation of 'Black Horn.' When you get to the end of your journey, you may say that I was inquiring after your lord."

Zuo Ci shook down his sleeves and left. In due course, the orange bearers reached the new Palace, and the oranges were presented. But when Cao Cao cut one open, it was but an empty shell of a thing: there was no pulp beneath the rind. Cao Cao was rather puzzled and called in the porters, who told him of their falling in with the mysterious Daoist on the way. But Cao Cao scouted the idea of that being the reason.

But just then, the warden of the gate sent to say that a certain Daoist named Zuo Ci was at the gate and wished to see the king.

“Send him in,” said Cao Cao.

“He is the man we met on the way,” said the porters when he appeared.

Cao Cao said curtly, “What sorcery have you been exercising on my beautiful fruit?”

“How could such a thing happen?” said the Daoist.

Thereupon, he cut open an orange and showed it full of pulp, most delicious to the taste. But when Cao Cao cut open another, that again was empty, nothing but rind.

Cao Cao was more than ever perplexed. He bade his visitor be seated, and, as Zuo Ci asked for refreshment, wine and food were brought in. The Daoist ate ravenously, consuming a whole sheep, and drank in proportion. Yet he showed no sign of intoxication or repletion.

“By what magic are you here?” said Cao Cao.

“I am but a poor Daoist. I went into Jialing in Shu, and on Emei Mountain, I studied the way for thirty long years. One day, I heard my name called from out the rocky wall of my cell. I looked but could see nothing. The same thing happened next day, and so on for many days. Then suddenly, with a roar like thunder, the rock split asunder, and I saw a sacred book in three volumes called *The Book of Concealing Method*—the first

volume was named 'Concealing Heaven,' the second 'Concealing Earth,' and the third 'Concealing Humanity.' From the first volume, I learned to ascend to the clouds astride the wind, to sail up into the great void itself; from the second to pass through mountains and penetrate rocks; from the third, to float light as vapor, over the seas, to become invisible at will or change my shape, to fling swords and project daggers so as to decapitate a man from a distance.

"You, O Prince, have reached the acme of glory. Why not now withdraw and, like me, become a disciple of the Daoists? Why not travel to Emei Mountain and there mend your ways so that I may bequeath my three volumes to you?"

"Oft have I reflected upon this course and struggled against my fate, but what can I do? There is no one to maintain the government," replied Cao Cao.

"There is Liu Bei of Yizhou, a scion of the dynastic family. Could you not make way for him? If you do not, I may have to send one of my flying swords after your head one day."

"You are one of his secret agents," said Cao Cao, suddenly enraged. "Seize him!" cried he to his lictors.

They did so, while the Daoist laughed. And Zuo Ci continued to laugh as they dragged him down to the dungeons, where they beat him cruelly. And when they had finished, the Daoist lay there gently respiring in a sound sleep, just as if he felt nothing whatsoever.

This enraged Cao Cao still more, and he bade them put the priest into the large wooden collar and nail it securely and then chain him in a cell. And Cao Cao set guards over him, and the guards saw the collar and chains just fall off while the victim lay fast asleep not injured in the least.

The Daoist lay in prison seven days without food or water. But when they went to look at him, he was sitting upright on the ground, quite well and rosy-looking.

The jailers reported these things to Cao Cao, who had the prisoner brought in.

“I do not mind going without food for years,” said the victim, when Cao Cao questioned him, “yet I could eat a thousand sheep in a day.”

Cao Cao was at the end of his resources. He could prevail nothing against such a man.

That day there was to be a great banquet at the new Palace, and guests came in crowds. When the banquet was in progress and the wine cup passing freely, suddenly the same Daoist appeared. He had wooden clogs on his feet. All faces turned in his direction and not a few were afraid; others wondered.

Standing there in front of the great assembly, the Daoist said, “O Powerful Prince, here today you have every delicacy on the table and a glorious company of guests. You have rare and beautiful objects from all parts of the world. Is there anything lacking? If there be anything you would like, name it and I will get it for you.”

Cao Cao replied, “Then I want a dragon’s liver to make soup; can you get that?”

“Where’s the difficulty?” replied Zuo Ci.

With a pencil, the Daoist immediately sketched a dragon on the whitewashed wall of the banquet hall. Then he flicked his sleeve over it, the dragon’s belly opened of itself, and therefrom Zuo Ci took the liver, all fresh and bloody.

“You had the liver hidden in your sleeve,” said Cao Cao, incredulous.

“Then there shall be another test,” said the Daoist. “It is winter, and every plant outside is dead. What flower would you like, O Prince. Name any one you will.”

“I want a peony,” said Cao Cao.

“Easy,” said the Daoist.

At this request, they brought out a flowerpot, which was placed in full view of the guests. Then he spurted some water over it, and in a very short time, up came a peony with two fully expanded flowers.

The guests were astonished, and they asked the Daoist to be seated and gave him wine and food. The cook sent in some minced fish.

“The best mince is made from the perch of the River Song,” said the Daoist.

“How can you get fish five hundred miles away?” said Cao Cao.

“Not at all difficult. Tell someone to get a rod and hook, and fish in the pond just below this banquet hall.”

They did so, and very soon, several beautiful perches lay on the steps.

“I have always kept some of these in my ponds, of course,” said Cao Cao.

“O Prince, do you think to deceive me? All perches have two gills except the River Song perch, which has two pairs. That is the distinguishing feature.”

The guests crowded round to look, and, surely enough, the fish had four gills.

“To cook this perch, one needs purple sprout ginger, though,” said the Daoist.

“Can you also produce that?” asked Cao Cao.

“Easily.”

Zuo Ci told them to bring in a silver bowl, which the magician filled with water. Very soon, the ginger filled the bowl, and he presented it to the host. Cao Cao put out his hand to pick some, when suddenly a book appeared in the bowl, and the title was *Cao Cao's New Treatise on the Art of War*. He took it out and read it over. Not a word of his treatise was missing.

Cao Cao became more mystified. Zuo Ci took up a jade cup that stood on the table, filled it with fine wine, and presented it to Cao Cao.

“Drink this, O Prince, and you will live a thousand years.”

“Drink of it first yourself,” said Cao Cao.

The Daoist took the jade pin from his headdress and drew it across the cup as if dividing the wine into two portions.

Then he drank one half and handed the cup with the other half to Cao Cao. But Cao Cao angrily refused it. The Daoist then threw the cup into the air, where it was transformed into a white dove, which circled round the banquet hall and then flew away.

All faces were turned upward following the flight of the dove, and so no one had noticed the going of the Daoist. But he was gone, and soon the gate warden reported that he had left the Palace.

Said Cao Cao, “A magician like this ought to be put to death, or he will do some mischief.”

The redoubtable Xu Chu and a company of three hundred armed men were sent to arrest the Daoist. They saw the Daoist, still wearing his wooden clogs, not far ahead but striding along quickly. Xu Chu rode after Zuo Ci, but in spite of all his horse could do, he could not catch up with Zuo Ci.

Xu Chu kept up the chase right to the hills, where he met a shepherd lad with a flock of sheep. And there walked the Daoist among the sheep. The Daoist disappeared. The angry warrior slew the whole flock of sheep, while the shepherd lad looked on, weeping.

Suddenly, the boy heard a voice from one of the severed heads, telling him to replace the heads on the bodies of his sheep. Instead of doing so, he fled in terror, covering his face.

Then he heard a voice calling to him, "Do not run away. You shall have your sheep again."

He turned, and lo! the sheep were all alive again, and Zuo Ci was driving them along. The boy began to question him, but the Daoist made no reply. With a flick of his sleeves, he was gone.

The shepherd lad went home and told all these marvels to his master, who could not conceal such a story, and it reached Cao Cao. Then, sketches of the Daoist were sent everywhere with orders to arrest him. Within three days were arrested in the city and outside three or four hundred persons all blind of one eye, lame of one leg, and wearing a rattan headdress, a black loose robe, and wooden clogs. They were all alike and all answered to the description of the missing Daoist.

There was a great hubbub in the street. Cao Cao ordered his officer to sprinkle the crowd of Daoists with the blood of pigs and goats in order to exorcise the witchcraft and take them away to the drill ground on the south of the city. Thither he followed them with his guards, who surrounded the crowd of arrested persons and slew everyone. But from the neck of each one, after the head was severed, there floated up into the air a wreath of black vapor, and all these wreaths drifted toward a center where they joined up into the image of another Zuo Ci, who presently beckoned to him a white crane out of the sky, mounted it, and sat as on a horse.

Clapping his hands, the Daoist cried merrily, "The rats of the earth follow the golden tiger, and one morning, the doer of evil shall be no more."

The soldiers shot arrows at both bird and man. At this, a tremendous storm burst over the city. Stones were driven along, sand was whirled about, and all the corpses arose from the ground, each holding his own head in his hands. They rushed toward Cao Cao as if to strike him. The officials covered their eyes, and none dared to look another in the face.

The power of a bold man will overturn a state.

The art of a necromancer also produces wonders.

Read the next chapter, and you will know the fate of Cao Cao.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVI

CHAPTER 69

GUAN LU SEES THINGS IN THE BOOK OF CHANGES; FIVE LOYAL
SUBJECTS DIE FOR THEIR STATE.

The sight of the corpses of his victims rising to their feet in the storm and running toward him was too much for Cao Cao, and he swooned. However, the wind quickly fell and the corpses disappeared. His followers assisted Cao Cao to his palace, but he was very ill.



A poet has celebrated the episode of the murdered Daoist:

He studied his magical books,
He was learned in mystical lore,
And with magical fleetness of foot
He could travel the wide world over.
The magical arts that he knew,
He employed in an earnest essay
To reform the bad heart of Cao Cao.
But in vain; Cao Cao held on his way.



Cao Cao's illness seemed beyond the art of the physicians, and drugs seemed of no avail. It happened that Minister Xu Zhi came from the capital

to visit the prince, who bade the latter take a cast from the *Book of Changes*.

“Have you ever heard of Guan Lu? He is more than human in his skill at divination,” said Xu Zhi.

“I have heard a lot about him, but I do not know how clever he is. You tell me about him,” replied Cao Cao.

“He is from Pingyuan. His face is ugly and coarse; he drinks to excess and is rather dissipated. His father was an elder of Langye. Since a lad, Guan Lu loved to study the stars, staying up all night to watch them, in spite of the prohibition of his father and mother. He used to say that if domestic fowls and wild geese knew the seasons naturally, how much more should humans. He often used to play with other children at drawing pictures of the sky on the ground, putting in the sun, moon, and stars. When he grew older, he studied the *Book of Changes* very deeply and observed the winds. He was a marvelous calculator and excellent physiognomist.

“His fame reached the ears of Shan Zichun, the Governor of Langye, who called him to his residence for an interview. There were present some hundred or so other guests, everyone of whom could be called able of speech.

“‘I am young and not over-bold,’ said Guan Lu to the Governor. ‘I pray you give me three flasks of wine to loosen my tongue.’ The request was astonishing, but the wine was brought in, and when he had drunk it, Guan Lu, looking contemptuously at the other guests, said, ‘Now I am ready. Are these the opponents you have got together for me to contend with? Are these gentlemen sitting around me disputants?’

“‘I myself am anxious for a match with you,’ said Shan Zichun. Then they began upon the meaning of the *Book of Changes*. Guan Lu’s words poured forth like a torrent, and his ideas were most recondite. The Governor replied, stating difficulties; Guan Lu swept them away in a stream of

eloquence. So it went on the whole day without a pause even for refreshment. Neither Shan Zichun nor his other guests could help praising Guan Lu and agreeing with him. His fame spread wide after this encounter, and people spoke of him as the ‘Supernatural Boy.’

“After this, he became famous in another way. There was a certain Guo En, a common man, who had two brothers. All three became lame, and they called in Guan Lu to cast lots and discover the reason. Guan Lu said, ‘By the lots, there is a female demon in your family tomb, an aunt, the wife of one of your father’s brothers. Some years ago, in a time of famine, for the sake of a few carts of grain, she was pushed into a well and a great stone was thrown in on her, crushing her head so that she suffered intensely. She complained to the Most High, and your lameness is the retribution for that crime. No prayers will avert the evil.’ The three brothers wept and acknowledged their guilt.

“Governor Wang Ji of Anping, heard of the diviner’s fame and invited him to come on a visit, and he went. It happened that another guest of the Governor was the magistrate of Xindu, whose wife suffered from headaches and his son from pains in the heart. Guan Lu was asked to discover the reason. He cast lots and said that at the west corner of the main hall there were buried two corpses, one of a man who held a spear, the other of a man who had a bow and arrows. The wall was built across them. The spearman’s master had gashed his head, and so his head pained. The archer’s master had stabbed him in the heart, and so his heart suffered anguish. They dug where Guan Lu indicated and, about eight spans down, found two coffins, one with a spear inside and the other with a strung bow and wooden arrows. All was much decayed. Guan Lu bade them remove the bones and bury them three miles outside the walls. Thereafter, the woman and her son suffered no more.

“A certain Zhuge Yuan, Magistrate of Guantao, newly promoted to Governor, was leaving for his new post, and Guan Lu went to see him off. One of the guests mentioned that Guan Lu could divine what was hidden from sight. The Governor doubted such powers and said he would put a test. He got a swallow’s egg, a wasp’s nest, and a spider, and concealed them in three separate boxes. He asked Guan Lu to guess the contents. The divination made, Guan Lu wrote three quatrains:

‘The latent life will declare itself;
It will cling to your lordly hall,
Or male or female, flung into space,
Wide wings will prevent its fall.
This seems to indicate a swallow’s egg.

‘A many-chambered dwelling
Is hanging to your eaves.
Each room has a poisonous tenant,
Who’ll be flying when he leaves.
This answers to a wasp’s nest.

‘Therein is a long-legged, trembling thing,
Who spins a thread from his inside
And spreads a fine spun net for flies;
He profits most at eventide.
And this is a spider.’

“The guests were amazed.

“An old woman in his village, having lost a cow, came to consult him. After the divination, he told her that seven men had taken away the cow and were cooking and eating it on the bank of a certain mountain stream. She

had better go there quickly and see who they were. If she went with all speed, she would find the skin and the flesh. The woman went and found the seven men hidden behind a small shanty, boiling beef. Most of the cow's flesh was still there. She told Governor Liu Bin, who arrested the seven men and punished them. Then the Governor asked the old lady how she got to know exactly who the offenders were, and she told him.

“Governor Liu Bin was dubious, too. He sent for Guan Lu and put him to the following test: he placed his seal and a pheasant feather in a box and asked what were the contents. The reply was:

‘Square within, without so round,
Beauteous colors here abound;
The jewel within is held secure
And what it witnesses is sure.
Is not this a seal in its bag?

‘There’s a bird on the precipice steep,
Its body with flame seems aglow.
Its wings are barred yellow and black.
At sunrise it never fails to crow.
And I think this hints at a pheasant feather.’

“Governor Liu Bin treated the marvelous diviner with great honor.

“One day, Guan Lu saw a youth plowing a field. After watching him for a long time, Guan Lu suddenly asked his name and age. The young man said, ‘My name is Zhao Yang, and I am nineteen. Pray, who may you be, Sir?’

“‘I am Guan Lu; you may have heard of me. I see an air of early death about you, and you will be done with life in three days. It is a pity that one

so handsome should die so young.'

"Zhao Yang forsook his plow, hurried home, and told his father. The father at once set out to find Guan Lu, and, having found Guan Lu, threw himself on the ground and besought the diviner to save his son.

"'How can I avert the doom? It is fate,' said Guan Lu.

"'Alas! I have but this one son; I pray you save him.'

"And the son added his tears and prayers to those of his father. Guan Lu was deeply touched. Then he turned to the lad and said, 'You get ready some good wine and some venison. Tomorrow, go into the forest on the south there, and underneath a lofty tree you will see two men seated on boulders playing chess. One of them will be dressed in white, and he will be facing the south. He is very evil-looking. The other will be seated opposite, dressed in red. He is very handsome. They will be deeply absorbed in their game and will not notice who offers them food and wine, which you will humbly present on your knees. When they have eaten and drunk, you will prostrate yourself and with tears pray them to grant you length of days. You will gain an increased span of life, but, above all things, do not mention that I told you what to do.'

"The father kept Guan Lu as a guest, and the next day, the son followed out his instructions. He entered the forest and soon came upon the two men seated beneath a pine, playing chess. They seemed oblivious to all around them. Zhao Yang presented the wine and the food, and the two men ate absentmindedly, for the game went on. But when Zhao Yang threw himself on the ground and implored the gift of long life, they seemed startled.

"'This must be some of Guan Lu's doing,' said Red Robe. 'Still, as we have accepted a gift at his hand, we must have pity on him.'

“He who was dressed in white then lifted up a book that hung at his side and looked therein.

“‘You are nineteen this year,’ said White Dress to Zhao Yang. ‘You ought to die. But we will insert a number nine over the number one and so make it read ninety-nine, and that is the age you will attain. But when you go back, tell Guan Lu he is not to betray the secrets of fate, or Heaven will surely punish him.’

“Then Red Robe took out a pen and added the figure. A gust of wind passed, and the two old men were transformed into two cranes that rose into the sky and flew away. Zhao Yang came back home and told what he had seen. Guan Lu told him the red-robed man was the Southern Dipper Constellation, and the white-robed, the Northern Dipper.

“‘But the Northern Dipper consists of nine stars, and there was only one man,’ objected the lad.

“‘Separately they are nine, but they combine to form one. The Northern Dipper records deaths; the Southern Dipper, births. Now the extra figure has been added, you need have no anxiety. You will live long.

“Father and son both thanked him most sincerely, but thereafter Guan Lu was very careful how he divined for people lest he should betray celestial secrets.

“Now, this man is at Pingyuan, and you, O Prince, can seek your fate of him. Why not call him?”

Cao Cao was greatly glad. Guan Lu was sent for and came. As soon as the salutations were over, Cao Cao asked him to cast lots for him.

Guan Lu at once found the cause and said, “Your illness is only due to magical machinations. It should not create anxiety.”

Cao Cao was much relieved in his mind, and his health began to improve. Next, Cao Cao wished to know about the conditions in the empire's affairs.

After the necessary calculations, the prophet said:

“Three and eight cross;
Where the army halt,
The yellow boar meets the tiger;
It causes the loss of one limb.”

Then Cao Cao asked him to inquire whether his life should be long or not.

Guan Lu replied:

“In the Lion Palace,
The talents of ancestors are preserved.
The Prince's way is securely renewed,
And his son and grandson shall come to high honor.”

Then Cao Cao asked concerning himself.

“Divination concerning the fate of the universe may not be foreknown. Wait a time, and I will look into it.”

Cao Cao was pleased and would have liked to keep such a man near him, so he offered him the post of Historiographer (who was also soothsayer) at his court, but it was declined.

“My destiny is mean, my luck despicable. I am not equal to such an office and dare not undertake it,” said Guan Lu.

“Why not?” said Cao Cao.

“My forehead has no lofty fullness; my eyes, no steady expression; my nose, no bridge; my feet, no round, solid heels; my back lacks the triple

armor (of shoulder blades and intervening muscles); and my breast the three marks (like the character indicating wealth). I can only control evil spirits securely; I cannot rule living humans.”

“What think you of my physiognomy?”

“What can a minister of extremely exalted rank like yourself desire further?” said Guan Lu.

Cao Cao pressed him to say. The soothsayer only laughed. Then Cao Cao asked him to look at the many officers of all kinds standing around.

“Everyone of them is a servant equal to the administration of the empire,” said Guan Lu.

But when Cao Cao asked whether good or bad fortune was to be his, the soothsayer would not give a clear and full reply.



A poem says:

Guan Lu was a seer of old.
Stars to him their secrets told.
Mysteries, occult and dim,
Were as daylight unto him.
His so subtle intellect
Could the shade of death detect,
But the secrets of his skill
Died with him, are secrets still.



Again Cao Cao asked him to divine concerning his rivals, Wu and Shu.

Guan Lu said, “The south just lost a famous leader, and the west is encroaching on your territory.”

Cao Cao’s doubts as to the accuracy of one of these events were soon set at rest, for a messenger came from Hefei to report: “Lu Su, the Commander-in-Chief of the South Land, has died in Lukou.”

Then Cao Cao sent hurriedly into Hanzhong, and the scout returned to report: “Zhang Fei and Ma Chao have taken the Xiabian Pass and are threatening Hanzhong.”

Cao Cao was angry and inclined to march at once against the invaders. But he consulted the great soothsayer, who advised him not to move.

“Do not act in haste. In the coming spring, there will be a conflagration in Xuchang,” said Guan Lu.

Having been witness of the verification of Guan Lu’s words, Cao Cao was in no mood to neglect the warning. He stayed on in his palace, but he sent Cao Hong with fifty thousand troops to assist in the defense of the East River Land, while Xiahou Dun, with thirty thousand troops, went to Xuchang to keep careful watch and be ready against any surprises. He placed High Minister Wang Bi in command of the Imperial Guard.

Sima Yi warned Cao Cao against this Wang Bi, saying, “The man is given to wine, and slack. He is not a fit person for such a post.”

Cao Cao replied, “He is very fit. He has followed me through all difficulties and dangers. He is loyal and diligent, solid as stone or iron.”

Wang Bi was appointed and led the guard into camp at the capital, outside the East Gate of the Imperial Palace.

Now there was a certain Geng Ji, a Luoyang man, who had long been employed in the Prime Minister's palace in a subordinate capacity and afterward had been promoted to a post of Minister. He and Minister Wei Huang were close friends.

These two were greatly distressed at Cao Cao's advance to princely rank, and more especially at his use of the imperial chariots. In the early months of the twenty-third year (AD 218), Geng Ji and Wei Huang came to a secret exchange of views on Cao Cao's conduct.

Geng Ji said, "The man is rebellious and wicked, every day behaving worse. He intends to go further, and how can we, as servants of the dynasty, help him in his wickedness?"

Wei Huang said, "I have a friend named Jin Yi, who also is a servant of Han and an enemy of Cao Cao's. He is a descendant of the old Great Minister Jin Midi. Beside, he is friendly with Wang Bi. If we all tried our best, we ought to succeed."

"But if he is friendly with Wang Bi, he will not assist us!" said Geng Ji.

"Let us go and sound him," said Wei Huang.

So the two went to see Jin Yi, who received them in his private rooms. There they talked.

Said Wei Huang, "O virtuous Jin Yi, we know you are on most friendly terms with Commander Wang Bi, and so have come to beg a favor."

"What is it you ask?"

"The Prince of Wei will soon receive the abdication of the Emperor and himself ascend to the seat of the mighty. Then you and your friend Wang Bi will advance to places of great honor. When that day comes, we

pray you not forget us but recommend us for employment. We should feel no shallow gratitude for your kindness.”

Jin Yi flicked down his sleeves and arose looking very angry. At that instant arrived the tea for the visitors. He snatched it away from the serving man and emptied it on the floor.

Wei Huang started up in feigned alarm.

“How have I offended you, my good friend?” cried he.

“I have been friends with you because you are descendants of people who have served the Hans faithfully. Now, instead of trying to repay the debt of gratitude you ought to feel, you turn aside to assist one who is their enemy; think you that I can regard you as friends? How could I look the world in the face?”

“But if it be destiny, one cannot help it,” said Geng Ji. “One must accept it.”

Jin Yi grew still more angry, so that the two visitors were convinced that at heart he was loyal to the dynasty. Then they began to tell him the true state of the case.

Said they, “Our real desire is to destroy this rebel, and we have come to ask your help in that. What we said at first was only a test to find out what you thought.”

“Think you, with my ancestry, generation after generation in the confidence and service of the Hans, that I would willingly follow a rebel? If you, Sirs, really think of restoring the dynasty, pray tell me your plans.”

“Though we have the desire to prove our gratitude, yet we lack the means to destroy the enemy,” said Wei Huang.

Said Jin Yi, “We desire helpers within and supporters without. If we could slay Wang Bi, we could use his name and troops to help the Emperor.

With the help of Liu Bei, the Imperial Uncle, we should be able to destroy the rebel Cao Cao.”

Hearing Jin Yi’s plan, the others clapped their hands in approval.

“And I have two friends outside of the city who will go with us,” said Jin Yi. “Both of them have the murder of a father to avenge. We can get their help.”

“Who are they?”

“They are sons of the great physician Ji Ping and are called Ji Mao and Ji Mu. Cao Cao put their father to death for his connection with the plot organized by Dong Cheng, when Dong Cheng received the secret edict conveyed in the robe and girdle, which was conferred upon him by the Emperor. The two sons escaped that time by flight, but they have since secretly returned to the capital. With their help, all will go well.”

Geng Ji and Wei Huang rejoiced at the prospect of further help, and a messenger was sent to call in the two Ji brothers. Soon they arrived, and the plot was laid before them. They were deeply affected and shed copious tears. Their wrath rose to the sky, and they swore to aid in the destruction of the rebel.

“On the fifteenth day of the first month, there will be grand illuminations in the city,” said Jin Yi, “and felicitations will continue on every side. Geng Ji and Wei Huang will each lead out their retainers and make their way quickly to Wang Bi’s camp to wait till they see the fire begin. Then they will dash in, slay Wang Bi, and follow me inside the Palace. We will then request the Emperor to ascend the Tower of the Five Phoenixes, assemble his officers, and issue orders to destroy the rebels. The two Ji brothers will make their way into the city and set fires going. Then all will raise their voices and summon the populace to their aid. They are to hold up any rescue force in the city till the Emperor has issued the edict and

disturbance is allayed, when they will rush toward Yejun and seize Cao Cao. Then a messenger will be dispatched with a summons for Liu Bei, the Imperial Uncle. We will begin our work that night at the second watch, and we will escape the ill success that attended Dong Cheng's attempt."

All five swore before Heaven to be true, and they smeared their lips with blood in earnest of their oath. After this, each returned to his own home to prepare arms and call up their people.

Geng Ji and Wei Huang each had four or five hundred retainers, whom they armed. Ji Mao and Ji Mu also got together three hundred men. They gave out a story of a hunting party to explain the gathering.

When the preparations were complete, and before the time fixed for the rising, Jin Yi went to see Wang Bi.

Said Jin Yi, "Everything in the world seems now tranquil, and the power of the Prince of Wei extends over all the land. It is a season of joy and felicitation; you can organize a lantern festival, and people shall hang out lanterns and put up decorations for the occasion."

So Wang Bi issued guidelines for a Feast of Lanterns in the city. The night of full moon was very clear, moon and stars most brilliant. The people of the capital took advantage of the night and thronged the streets and the marketplaces. The lanterns were hung out in profusion, and all went merrily.



No official interfered with the crowd;
No one thought of the flight of time;
All was simple gaiety.

That night, the Commander of the Imperial Guard, Wang Bi, and his officers had a feast in their camp. Just after the second watch had begun, they heard a great shouting in the camp, and someone came in to say that a fire had started in the rear. Wang Bi hurriedly left the table and went outside. He saw flames leaping up and rolling by and heard shouts of "Kill!" rising on every side and echoing to the very sky. He thought the camp had certainly mutinied and, jumping on his horse, went out at the south gate. Just outside, he ran against Geng Ji, who loosed an arrow which struck him in the shoulder. He nearly fell with the shock, but he got away toward the west gate. He found he was pursued by armed men, so he became flurried, dismounted, and went on foot. Presently, he came to the house of Jin Yi and hammered at the door.

Now the fire that had created such a scare had been raised by Jin Yi's own people sent for that purpose, and Jin Yi had followed them to fight when the time came. Hence, there was no one but the womenfolk left in his house. When the women heard the clamor at the door, they thought Jin Yi had come back.

Jin Yi's wife, from the door of the women's quarters, called out, "Have you killed Wang Bi?"

This was a shock, but it told Wang Bi that his quondam friend was now an enemy.

Wherefore Wang Bi fled further, to the house of Cao Xiu, and told him, "Geng Ji and Jin Yi have raised a disturbance."

Cao Xiu immediately armed himself, got to horse, and led out a thousand troops. He found fires on all sides; even the Tower of the Five Phoenixes was in flames. The Emperor had fled into the recesses of the Palace, but Cao Cao's friends and partisans were defending the Palace gates like grim death.

In the city, the crowd was shouting one to another: “Slay Cao Cao and restore the Hans!”

When Xiahou Dun had received thirty thousand troops and the command to keep watch and ward over the capital, he had gone into camp three miles from the city. When he saw the conflagration start, he set the army in motion and surrounded the city. He also sent reinforcements to Cao Xiu within.

Inside the city, the fighting went on all night. No one joined the conspirators; the small band were left to their own efforts. Soon it was reported that Jin Yi, Ji Mao, and Ji Mu were slain. Geng Ji and Wei Huang found their way to one of the gates, but there they met Xiahou Dun’s main force and were made prisoners. The handful of men with them were cut to pieces.

When the fighting subsided, Xiahou Dun went into the city and set his troops to put out the fires. He also laid hands on the whole households of the five conspirators. Then he sent a report to Cao Cao, who sent back orders to execute the two conspirators and put to death in public all the members of the five families. He was also to arrest every official and send the whole batch to Yejun for interrogations.

Xiahou Dun sent his two chief prisoners to the place of execution. They shouted against Cao Cao.

“Living, we have failed to slay you, Cao Cao. Dead, we will be malicious spirits smiting rebels in all places!”

The executioner smote Geng Ji on the mouth with his sword, so that the blood gushed out, but he continued to shout as long as he could.

Wei Huang, his fellow conspirator, dashed his temples on the ground, crying, “How I hate him!” and ground his teeth till he broke them to

fragments. And they both died of hatred and exhaustion.



Who can with outstretched hands uphold the sky
Or thrones maintain by simple loyalty?
Han's day was done; two would avert the doom,
But failed, and carried anger to the tomb.



Xiahou Dun carried out his chief's orders and sent the officials he had arrested to Yejun. There Cao Cao set up two flags, one red and one white, in the drill ground and sent all the officials thither. Then he addressed them.

“In this late rebellion, some of you went out to extinguish the fire, some of you stayed within doors. Let those who went forth to put out the fire take their stand by the red flag, and those who remained in their houses go to the white flag.”

The officials thought within themselves, “Certainly there can be nothing wrong in trying to put out a fire,” so they nearly all placed themselves under the red flag. Only about a third went to the white.

Then the order was given to seize all those by the red flag.

They protested. “We are guiltless!” cried they.

Cao Cao said, “At that time, you intended not to put out the flames but to aid the rebels.”

He sent them all down to the River Zhang and had them put to death on the bank. There were more than three hundred victims. He rewarded

those who were under the white flag and sent them to their homes in the capital.

Wang Bi died from his wound and was buried with great honor.

Cao Xiu was placed over the guards; Zhong Yao was created Prime Minister of the principedom of Wei; Hua Xin became High Minister. The occasion was taken to create six grades of the title of Lordship with three divisions each, eighteen in all. There were seventeen grades of Marquis West of the Pass. And all these had golden seals of office with purple ribbons. There were also sixteen ranks of Interior Marquis and Exterior Marquis. They had silver seals with tortoise ornaments on the back and black ribbons. There were five classes of Minister with three grades in each class. These had brass seals, with chain ornaments and ribbons. And with all these various gradations of ranks and nobility reorganized, the court was entirely reformed. There were new ranks and new people in office.

Cao Cao then remembered the warning about a conflagration in the capital and wished to reward Guan Lu for his prescience, but he would receive nothing.

Meanwhile, in the East River Land, Cao Hong with an army of fifty thousand went into Hanzhong. He placed Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He in command at points of importance, while he went on to the attack. At that time Zhang Fei and Lei Tong were holding Baxi. Ma Chao marched to Xiabian and sent Wu Lan out as Van Leader to reconnoiter. Wu Lan fell in with Cao Hong, and he was going to retire. But General Ren Kui advised against this.

Said Ren Kui, "The enemy are newly arrived. Why not fight and take the keen edge off their pride? If we do not fight, how can we look our chief in the face when we return?"

So it was decided to offer battle, and Ren Kui rode out and challenged Cao Hong. The challenge was accepted, and the warriors advanced. Cao Hong cut Ren Kui down in the third encounter and pressed the advantage, and Wu Lan was beaten off. When Wu Lan returned and told Ma Chao, he was blamed.

"Why did you attack without orders and bring about this defeat?"

"It was the fault of Ren Kui, who disobeyed orders."

"Defend the Pass most carefully. Do not engage," said Ma Chao.

Ma Chao sent a report to capital Chengdu and awaited orders for a further action. Cao Hong suspected some ruse when Ma Chao remained so long inactive and retired to Nanzheng.

Here he was visited by Zhang He, who asked, "General, why did you retire after the successful attack and slaughter of one of the enemy leaders?"

"Seeing that Ma Chao declined to come out to fight, I suspected some ruse," replied Cao Hong. "Beside, when I was at Yejun, that wonderful soothsayer, Guan Lu, foretold the loss of a leader here. I heeded what he said and so was careful."

Zhang He laughed, "You have been a leader of soldiers for half your life, and yet you heed the sayings of a soothsayer! I may be of small wit, but I would take Baxi with my own troops, and the possession of Baxi would be the key to the whole of Shu."

"The defender of Baxi is Zhang Fei," said Cao Hong. "He is no ordinary man to meet. One must be careful."

“All of you fear this Zhang Fei, but I do not. I look upon him as a mere nobody. I shall have to capture him this time.”

“But if you fail, what then?”

“Then I shall be content to pay the penalty according to military rules.”

Cao Hong made him put his undertaking in writing, and then Zhang He marched to the attack.

The proud are often defeated;
Lightsome attacks oft fail.

The following chapter will tell how Zhang He fared.



END OF ACT XVI

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XVII:

CLASH OF VETERANS:

THE HANZHONG CAMPAIGN

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVII

CHAPTER 70

ZHANG FEI TAKES WAKOU PASS WITH TACTICS; HUANG ZHONG
CAPTURES TIANDANG MOUNTAIN BY STRATAGEM.

Zhang He's army, with which he felt so sure of victory, consisted of thirty thousand troops, and they were in three camps—Camp Dangqu, Camp Mengtou, and Camp Dangshi—which were protected by the hills. When Zhang He marched, he left half the soldiers in each camp as defenders.

The news soon reached Baxi, and Zhang Fei called in his colleague Lei Tong to give his opinion.

Lei Tong said, "The country is bad and the hills full of danger in the area of Langzhong. Let us lay an ambush. You, General, go out to give battle, and I will help you by a sudden, unexpected attack. We ought to get Zhang He."

Whereupon, Zhang Fei gave five thousand troops to Lei Tong and himself led out ten thousand troops to a point ten miles from Langzhong. Having set them in order, he rode out and challenge Zhang He to single combat. Zhang He galloped out to meet him.

After the thirtieth bout or so, Zhang He's ranks suddenly began to shout and soon showed signs of confusion. The reason was the appearance of the banners of Shu from the cover of some hills. Zhang He dared not continue to fight, and he fled. Zhang Fei pursued him. Lei Tong also appeared in his road and attacked, and so, with enemies on both sides, Zhang He forced his way out and lost the day. Both Zhang Fei and Lei Tong

continued to smite him, even into the night, till he got back to his camp at Dangqu.

Zhang He reverted to his old plan of defending the three camps, rolling down logs and hurling stones. But he remained behind his defenses. Zhang Fei made a camp three miles off.

Next day, Zhang Fei went forth and offered battle, but Zhang He took no notice. Zhang He ascended to the summit of the hill and drank wine to the accompaniment of trumpets and drums, but he would not fight. Zhang Fei bade his soldiers shout insults, but these had no effect. Lei Tong was sent up the hill, but the rolling logs and hurtling stones forced him to retire. Then the defenders of the other two camps came out to the attack, and Lei Tong was discomfited.

Next day Zhang Fei again offered battle, but there was no response. Again the soldiers yelled every form of insult, but Zhang He from the hilltop only replied by similar abuse. Zhang Fei was at his wits' ends. This game was played for more than fifty days.

Then, Zhang Fei made a strong stockade just in front of the hill, and therein he sat day after day drinking till he became half-drunk. And when he was so, he reviled his opponent.

About this time, Liu Bei sent gifts to the army, and when the messenger went back, he told Liu Bei that his Brother was giving himself over to wine. This made Liu Bei anxious, so he lost no time in asking advice from Zhuge Liang.

Zhugé Liang was jocular, saying, "Since that is so, let us send him fifty vessels of the best brew of Chengdu. He probably has but poor stuff in the

camp.”

“But he has always had a weakness for wine, and he has failed because of it. Yet you would encourage him to drink by sending him more wine?”

“My lord, is it that you do not understand your Brother, even after all these years? He is brave and steady, yet when we first invaded the West River Land, he released Yan Yan, which was not what a mere brave would have done. He is face-to-face with Zhang He, and has been for nearly two months, and day after day he drinks and rages and insults his enemy openly. He treats Zhang He with most perfect contempt. But this is not only the wine cup; it is a deep plan to get the better of Zhang He.”

“This may be so,” replied Liu Bei, “but let us not rely upon it too much. Let Wei Yan go to help him.”

Zhuge Liang sent Wei Yan with the wine, and the carts set out, each flying a yellow flag with a writing in large characters: “Fine Wine for the Frontier Army.”

When Wei Yan reached the army, he handed over the wine, which he said was a gift from the Lord of Shu. And Zhang Fei received it with due respect.

Zhang Fei told Wei Yan and Lei Tong each to take a thousand troops and move out on the two wings, ready to act when they saw a red flag displayed. And then he had the wine laid out and called up some soldiers to drink with a great display of flags and a rolling of drums.

The spies reported all these doings on the hilltop, and Zhang He came out to look for himself. There he saw his opponent drinking, and two of the soldiers were boxing before Zhang Fei for his amusement.

“He despises me too much,” said Zhang He.

And Zhang He gave orders to prepare for a night attack on the enemy camp. His own troops in Camp Dangqu would do the raiding, and those from Camp Mengtou and Camp Dangshi were to support them.

There was little moon that night, and Zhang He took advantage of the obscurity to steal down the side of the hill. He got quite close to the enemy camp and stood for a time looking at Zhang Fei sitting amid a blaze of lamps and drinking. Suddenly, Zhang He dashed forward with a yell, and at the same moment, his drums on the hilltop rolled out their defiance. Zhang Fei never stirred. Zhang He rushed at him and delivered a mighty thrust with his spear. Zhang Fei toppled over—it was a Zhang Fei of straw.

Zhang He checked and turned his steed. At that moment he heard a string of detonations, and a warrior appeared before him, barring his way. It was the real Zhang Fei, as the round head and thundering voice speedily made manifest.

With the Serpent Halberd set, Zhang Fei rode toward Zhang He. The two warriors fought many bouts under the gleaming lights. No help came to Zhang He. In vain he yearned for the assistance which the two camps were to bring him. He did not know that his reinforcements had been driven back by Wei Yan and Lei Tong, and that the two camps, Mengtou and Dangshi, were now in possession of his enemies. As the help did not come, Zhang He was powerless; to add to his discomfiture, the glare of fire out in the mountains of Dangqu told him of the seizure of his third camp by Zhang Fei's rear force. Nothing could be done, and Zhang He cut an alley, forced out of the press, and fled to Wakou Pass. The victory was all to Zhang Fei.

The news of the success delighted Liu Bei, and he knew then that Zhang Fei's drinking had been part of a stratagem to entice his enemy into the open and defeat them.

Zhang He reached Wakou Pass, but with the loss of two-thirds of his army of thirty thousand troops. He stood on defense and sent urgent messages to Cao Hong to come to his rescue.

Cao Hong angrily replied, "He disobeyed my orders and marched. He has lost an important point and now he sends to me for help!"

While refusing aid, Cao Hong sent to urge his colleague to go out and fight. But Zhang He too greatly feared.

At length, Zhang He decided upon a plan of action. He sent out two parties into ambush and said to them, "I will pretend defeat and flee. They will follow, and you can cut off their retreat."

When he did march out, he met Lei Tong. The two engaged in battle, and Zhang He presently ran away. Lei Tong pursued and fell into the ambush. Then Zhang He returned and slew Lei Tong. His troops went back and told Zhang Fei, who came up to provoke another fight. Zhang He again tried his stratagem, but Zhang Fei did not pursue. Again and again the ruse was tried, but Zhang Fei knew it was only a ruse and simply retired to his own camp.

He said to Wei Yan, "Zhang He has compassed the death of Lei Tong by leading him into an ambush, and he wants to inveigle me into another. What say you to meeting trick with trick?"

"But how?" said Wei Yan.

"Tomorrow I will lead the army forward, you following me with some reliable soldiers. When his army come out from their ambush, you can smite them, sending half your men against each party. We will secretly fill the byroads with loads of combustibles, entice the enemy among them, and

start a fire. In the confusion, I shall try to capture Zhang He. So will we avenge our comrade's death."

So Zhang Fei went out, and Zhang He's troops came and began to fight. After a half-score bouts, Zhang He ran away, and this time Zhang Fei pursued. Zhang He, now fleeing, now stopping to exchange a blow or two, led Zhang Fei through the hills to a valley. Here, suddenly changing front to rear and rear to front, Zhang He halted, made a camp, and offered battle.

It was now the time when Zhang He expected his hidden troops to appear and surround Zhang Fei. But none appeared. He knew not that his ambush had been broken up by Wei Yan's army and driven into the valley where the road was filled with cartloads of combustibles, and that the valley even then was all aflame.

Then Zhang Fei came to the attack, and the rout was complete. Zhang He, fighting desperately, got through to the Wakou Pass and there mustered the remnant of his force. He strengthened the position and remained behind his ramparts.

Zhang Fei and Wei Yan then tried to take the Pass, but day after day they failed. Zhang Fei, seeing no hope of success, retired seven miles and bivouacked. From this point, he sent out scouts under Wei Yan to explore the country. While going along, they observed some burden-bearers, men and women, going up a very retired path, pulling down the creepers, and pushing aside the grasses.

"That is the way to take Wakou Pass," cried Zhang Fei, pointing with his whip to the wayfarers.

He ordered his soldiers not to scare the people, but to call a few gently and bring them to him. They soon had several standing before their leader, who spoke to them kindly and put them at ease.

“Whence come you?” asked Zhang Fei.

“We belong to Hanzhong and are going home. We heard that you were out fighting and the high road to Langzhong was blockaded, and so we have come across the Mist Torrent and Zitong Mountains and down River Guijin. We are going to our homes in Hanzhong.”

“Can one reach Wakou Pass by this road? And how far is it?”

The country people replied, “A small road leads past to the rear of the Pass from Zitong Mountains.”

For this piece of information Zhang Fei rewarded them by taking them into his camp and giving them a good meal. Then, he sent off Wei Yan to make a frontal attack on the Pass, while he himself with five hundred light cavalry attacked it from the rear by way of Mount Zitong.

Zhang He was grieved and disappointed that Cao Hong sent no help, and the news of Wei Yan’s attack only added to his sorrow. But he girded on his armor and was about to ride out when they told him that fires had started at half-a-dozen places behind the Pass. They most likely indicated soldiers. However, he went out to meet them, and, to his horror, when the flags opened out, his eyes fell on the figure of Zhang Fei. Away he ran along a byroad.

But his steed was not fast, and as Zhang Fei pressed him close, Zhang He dismounted and ran up the mountainside. So Zhang He escaped. He had, however, some ten followers, and it was a small and dejected party that presently found its way into Nanzheng. He saw Cao Hong, and Cao Hong was very angry at his plight.

“I told you not to go, but you were willful. And you gave in your written pledge. You have lost all your soldiers, yet you do not commit suicide. What will you do next?”

Cao Hong ordered the lictors to put Zhang He to death. But Marching General Guo Huai interceded.

“An army is easily raised; a leader is hard to find. Though Zhang He is guilty, he is a great favorite with our prince. I think you should spare him. Rather, give him command of another army and send him to take Jiameng Pass and so hold up the soldiers at all the stations. Hanzhong will be tranquil of its own accord. If he fails a second time, you can punish him for both faults.”

Cao Hong was satisfied to do this, and instead of dealing with his fault, he gave Zhang He five thousand troops and told him to take Jiameng Pass.

The commanders of the Pass were Meng Da and Huo Jun. They were at variance, Meng Da desiring to go out to meet Zhang He but Huo Jun being in favor of defense. Meng Da, being set on having his way, went out, gave battle, and was defeated. Huo Jun reported this to the capital, where Liu Bei at once called in the Directing Instructor to ask advice. Zhuge Liang assembled all the chief generals into the hall.

“Jiameng Pass is in danger. We must get Zhang Fei from Langzhong to drive off Zhang He,” said Zhuge Liang.

Fa Zheng replied, “Zhang Fei is encamped at Wakou Pass, and Langzhong is no less important than Jiameng Pass. I do not think he should be recalled. Choose one among the generals to go and defeat Zhang He.”

Zhuge Liang laughed, “Zhang He is renowned in Wei. No ordinary leader will avail. Zhang Fei is the only man to send, the only one equal to the task.”

Then, among the generals, one started up, crying angrily, “Instructor, why do you thus despise us? I will use what little skill I have in slaying our enemy and will lay his head at the foot of our standard.”

The speaker was Veteran General Huang Zhong, and all eyes centered on him.

“Friend Huang Zhong, you are bold enough, but what about your age? I fear you are no match for Zhang He.”

Huang Zhong’s white beard bristled, and he said, “I know I am old. But these two arms can still pull the four-hundred-fifty-pound bow, and the vigor of my body is not yet departed. Am I not strong enough to meet such a poor thing as Zhang He?”

“General, you are nearly seventy. Can you still hold you are not aged?”

Huang Zhong tore down the hall. Seizing one of the great swords off the rack, he whirled it as if it flew. And the stiffest bow that hung on the wall, he pulled till it snapped.

“Well, if you will go, who will second you?” said Zhuge Liang.

“I would prefer Veteran General Yan Yan. And if there is the least anxiety, well, here is this hoary head.”

Liu Bei was pleased to let these two go to fight Zhang He. However, Zhao Yun put in a protest.

“Zhang He has already got through Jiameng Pass, so that the fighting will be no child’s play, and the loss of that Pass endangers the whole of Yizhou. It is no task to set to a couple of old men.”

Replied Zhuge Liang, "You regard the two as too old to succeed, but I think the attainment of Hanzhong depends upon these two."

Zhao Yun and many others sniggered as they went from the hall. They did not agree with Zhuge Liang.

In due course, the two Veteran Generals arrived at the Pass.

At sight of them, Meng Da and Huo Jun, the defenders of the Pass, laughed in their hearts, thinking: "Zhuge Liang has slipped up in his calculations in sending such a pair of dotards on such an important mission."

Huang Zhong said to Yan Yan, "You see the behavior of these people? They are laughing at us because we are old. Now we will do something that will win admiration from all the world."

"I should be glad to hear your orders," replied Yan Yan.

The two generals came to a decision on how to act.

Huang Zhong led his army down below to meet Zhang He in the open plain. Both drew up their array. When Zhang He rode out and saw his venerable opponent, he laughed in his face.

"You must be very old, and yet you are unashamed to go into battle, eh?" said Zhang He.

"You menial!" replied the veteran. "Do you despise me for my age? You will find my good sword, however, keen enough." So he urged forward his steed and rode at Zhang He.

The two chargers met and a score of bouts were fought. Then, suddenly, a great shouting came from the rear. Yan Yan had come up and

fallen upon the rear portion of Zhang He's army. Thus attacked on two sides, Zhang He was defeated. The pursuit did not cease with nightfall, and Zhang He was driven back near thirty miles. Contented with this success, Huang Zhong and Yan Yan went into their camp, where they rested their soldiers for a time.

When Cao Hong heard of Zhang He's new defeat, he was going to exact the penalty. But Guo Huai persuaded him to forbear.

"If he is pressed too hard, he may take refuge in Shu," said Guo Huai. "Rather send him help. You will thus keep a hold over him and prevent his desertion."

Wherefore, Xiahou Shang and Han Hao were sent with reinforcements. Xiahou Shang was a nephew of Xiahou Dun, and Han Hao was the brother of Han Xuan, the late Governor of Changsha. They had five thousand troops.

The two generals soon reached Zhang He, and asked how now the situation was going.

"That old man Huang Zhong is really a hero," said Zhang He, "and with Yan Yan's help he is very formidable."

"When I was at Changsha, I heard the old man was very fierce. He and Wei Yan yielded the city to Liu Bei and killed my own brother. Now that I shall meet him, I can have my revenge," said Han Hao.

So he and Xiahou Shang led out the new army.

Now, by means of spies, Huang Zhong had gotten a thorough knowledge of the country.

Yan Yan said, "Hereabout there is a mountain named Tiandang Mountain wherein Cao Hong has stored his supplies. If we can gain its possession, we shall reduce the enemy to want and we shall get Hanzhong."

Huang Zhong replied, "I think so, too, and so let us do so and so."

Yan Yan agreed with him and marched off with a body of troops to carry out his part in the stratagem.

At news of the coming of new armies, Huang Zhong marched out to meet them. He found Han Hao in front of his array, and Han Hao began to abuse the veteran, shouting out, "Disgraceful old ruffian!"

Then, Han Hao whipped up his steed and set his spear at Huang Zhong. Xiahou Shang also rode out and took part in the combat. The Veteran held them both at bay for some half-score bouts and then fled. They pursued him for seven miles, when they reached and seized his camp. Huang Zhong, however, quickly made another defense of brushwood. Next day Xiahou Shang and Han Hao renewed the pursuit, which ended with the capture of the temporary camp of the day before. And they had advanced seven miles further.

Then they called upon Zhang He to protect the rear camp. When Zhang He came up, he dissuaded them from continuing.

"Huang Zhong has retreated before you for two days. There is some deep stratagem behind this," said Zhang He.

Xiahou Shang scoffed at him, saying, "You are such a coward that you have been defeated many times. Now say no more but let us accomplish something."

Zhang He retired much mortified and ashamed. Next day, the two generals again went out to battle, and again Huang Zhong fled from them for seven miles. The two generals pursued as quickly as they could. The day after, Huang Zhong fled without any pretense of showing fight, except at short intervals. He got to Jiameng Pass and went on the defensive. The pursuers knocked at the very gate of the Pass and made a camp close by.

Then, Meng Da secretly wrote to Liu Bei that Huang Zhong had been repeatedly defeated and now was in the Pass and unable to go out.

Liu Bei became alarmed and consulted Zhuge Liang, who said, "The old general is making the enemy overconfident...to their ultimate destruction."

But Zhao Yun did not share this opinion, nor did many others, and Liu Bei decided to send Liu Feng to reinforce his aged general.

The young man came to the Pass and saw Huang Zhong, who asked him, "General, what makes you come here?"

"My father heard that you have sustained several defeats, and he has sent me," said Liu Feng.

"But I am only employing the ruse of leading on the enemy," said Huang Zhong, smiling. "You will see tonight that, in one battle, I shall regain all the camps and capture their supplies and many horses. I have only lent the camps to them to store their supplies. Tonight, I shall leave Huo Jun to guard the Pass, while General Meng Da will gather up the spoils for us. Now, young Sir, you shall see the destruction of the enemy."

That same night, at the second watch, Huang Zhong left the Pass with five thousand troops. But now Xiahou Shang and Han Hao, seeing no move from the Pass for many days, had become careless and so their camps were unable to resist. Their troops had no time to don their armors or to saddle

their horses. All the leaders could do was flee for their lives, while their troops trampled each other down and were killed in great numbers. All three camps were recovered by dawn, and in them were found all sorts of military equipment. Horses and their caparisons also fell to the victors, and all the booty was carried off by Meng Da and stored in the Pass.

Huang Zhong pressed on his victory. Liu Feng ventured to say, "Our soldiers need repose."

"Can you seize the tiger's whelps without going into the tiger's den?" cried Huang Zhong. And he urged on his steed. The soldiers also were eager.

Zhang He's own army was thrown into confusion by the flying men from the defeated armies, and he could not maintain his station, but was forced to retreat. They abandoned all their stockades and rushed to the bank of the River Han.

Then, Zhang He sought the two generals who had brought about the misfortune and said to them, "This is Tiandang Mountain, where our stores are. Close by is Micang Mountain. The two mountains are the very source of life of the Hanzhong army. Lose them, and Hanzhong is gone too. We must see to their security."

Xiahou Shang said, "My uncle, Xiahou Yuan, will look out for the defense of Micang Mountain, which is next to his station at Dingjun Mountain; there need be no anxiety about that. And my brother, Xiahou De, guards Tiandang Mountain. Let us go to him and help to protect that."

Zhang He and the two generals set out at once. They reached the mountain and told Xiahou De all that had happened.

“I have one hundred thousand troops in camp here,” replied he. “You may take some of them and recover your lost camps.”

“No,” replied Zhang He. “The only proper course is to defend.”

Almost as they spoke, the rolling of drums and the clang of gongs were heard, and the lookouts came to say that Huang Zhong was near.

“The old ruffian does not know much of the art of war,” said Xiahou De with a laugh. “After all, he is only a brave.”

“Be not mistaken: he is crafty and not only bold,” said Zhang He.

“This move is against the rules and not at all crafty. He is worn from a long march, his soldiers are fatigued, and they are deep in an enemy’s country.”

“Nevertheless, be careful how you attack,” said Zhang He. “You would still do well to depend upon defense only.”

“Give me three thousand good soldiers, and I will cut him to pieces,” cried Han Hao.

They told off the three companies for him, and down he went into the plain. As he approached, Huang Zhong arrayed his army.

Liu Feng put in a note of warning, saying, “The sun is setting, and our men are weary. Let us retire for the fight tomorrow.”

But Huang Zhong paid little attention, saying, “I do not hold with your objections. This is the one Heaven-sent opportunity to make good, and it would be a sin not to take it.”

So saying, the drums rolled for a great attack. Han Hao came forward with his troops, and the aged general went toward him whirling his sword. In the first encounter, Han Hao fell.

At this, the soldiers of Shu gave a yell and went away up the hill, whereupon Zhang He and Xiahou Shang hastily moved out to withstand

them. But a great red glare sprang into the sky from behind the hill, and a shouting arose. Hastily, Xiahou De led off his troops to meet the danger there and went straight into the arms of Yan Yan. The Veteran General's arm rose, the sword fell, and Xiahou De dropped from his steed to rise no more.

This ambush into which the dead general had rushed had been carefully prepared by Huang Zhong, who had sent Yan Yan away before he marched himself and given Yan Yan orders on what to do. It was the brushwood that Yan Yan's men had spent the time in collecting that now sent forth the flames reaching up to the heavens and filling the valleys.

Yan Yan, after slaying Xiahou De, came round the hill to aid in the attack so that the defenders were taken both in front and rear. They could do nothing and presently left the battlefield, rushing toward Dingjun Mountain to seek refuge with Xiahou Yuan.

Meanwhile, the victors took steps to hold the position they had won and sent the good news of victory to Capital Chengdu. And when the news arrived, Liu Bei called together all his officers to rejoice.

Then said Fa Zheng, "Not long ago Zhang Lu submitted to Cao Cao, and thereby Cao Cao got possession of Hanzhong quite easily. Instead of following up this by an advance westward, he left two generals to guard it and went south. That was a mistake. Now, my lord, do not make a mistake yourself, but take advantage of the present favorable position, with Zhang He newly defeated and Tiandang Mountain captured, to attack Hanzhong, and you will have it at once. Once that is yours, you can train your army and amass supplies ready for a stroke against the arch-rebel himself. This Heaven-sent advantage will be confirmed to you, and you should not miss it."

Both Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang saw the wisdom of this scheme and prepared to act. Zhao Yun and Zhang Fei were to lead the van, while Liu Bei with Zhuge Liang commanded the main army of one hundred thousand troops. A day was chosen to set out, and orders were sent to everyone to keep careful guard for Yizhou.

It was a certain auspicious day in the seventh month of the twenty-third year (AD 218) that the army marched. Reaching Jiameng Pass, Huang Zhong and Yan Yan were summoned and well-rewarded for their services.

Liu Bei said to Huang Zhong, "People said you were old, General, but the Directing Instructor of the army knew you better than they, and you have rendered amazing service. Still, Dingjun Mountain is yet to be captured, and it is both a great, central store and a major defense of Nanzheng. If we could get Dingjun Mountain, we could be quite easy about the whole region of Hanzhong. Think you that you are equal to taking Dingjun Mountain?"

To this harangue of Liu Bei, the veteran nobly answered that he was willing to try and was ready to start when they would.

Said Zhuge Liang hastily, "Do not be hasty. You are brave enough, General, but Xiahou Yuan is a man of different stamp from Zhang He. Xiahou Yuan is a real strategist and tactician; so much so that Cao Cao relies upon him as his defense against Xiliang. It was he who was set to defend Changan when threatened by Ma Chao. Now he is in Hanzhong, and Cao Cao puts his whole confidence in him and his skill as a leader. You have overcome Zhang He, but it is not certain you will conquer this man. I think I must send down to Jingzhou for Guan Yu for this task."

Huang Zhong hotly replied, “Old Lian Po was eighty years old, and yet he ate a bushel of rice and ten pounds of flesh so that his vigor frightened the nobles and not one dared encroach upon the borders of the state of Zhao. I am not yet seventy. You call me old, O Instructor; then I will not take any helper but go out simply with my own three thousand troops, and we will lay Xiahou Yuan’s head at your feet.”

Zhuge Liang refused to allow him to go; Huang Zhong insisted. At last Zhuge Liang consented, but said he would send an overseer.

They put upon his mettle the man who was to go,
Youth’s vigor may be lesser worth than age’s powers,
we know.

The next chapter will tell who the overseer was.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVII

CHAPTER 71

AT OPPOSITE HILL, HUANG ZHONG SCORES A SUCCESS; ON THE RIVER
HAN, ZHAO YUN CONQUERS A HOST.

“If you are really determined to undertake this expedition, I shall send Fa Zheng with you,” said Zhuge Liang to the veteran leader. “You will have to discuss everything with him. I shall also dispatch supports and reinforcements.”

Huang Zhong agreed, and the expedition set out.

Then Zhuge Liang explained to Liu Bei, “I purposely tried to spur on the old general that he will really exert himself, else he fears he will not do much. But he will need reinforcement.”

After this, Zhuge Liang ordered Zhao Yun to march after the first army and help, if help was needed. So long as the old man was victorious, Zhao Yun was to do nothing; if he was in difficulties, then Zhao Yun was to rescue.

Also, three thousand troops under Liu Feng and Meng Da were sent out among the hills to take position at strategic points and set up many banners and make a brave show in order to spread the impression of huge forces, and so frighten and perplex the enemy. In addition, Zhuge Liang sent to Xiabian Pass to tell Ma Chao what part to play in the campaign. Yan Yan was to hold Langzhong and Baxi in place of Zhang Fei and Wei Yan, who also went in expedition in Hanzhong.

The refugees, Zhang He and Xiahou Shang, reached Xiahou Yuan's camp and told their doleful tale, "Tiandang Mountain has been captured, and Xiahou De and Han Hao have died with the loss. Liu Bei is about to invade Hanzhong. Send a swift messenger to inform the Prince of Wei and ask for help."

The news was sent to Cao Hong, who bore it quickly to Capital Xuchang.

Cao Cao lost no time in calling a council.

Then High Minister Liu Ye said, "The loss of Hanzhong would shake the whole Middle Land. You, O Prince, must not shrink from toil and hardship, but must yourself go to lead the army."

"This state of things comes of my not heeding your words before, gentle Sir," said Cao Cao, then repentant.

However, Cao Cao hastily prepared and issued an edict to raise an army of four hundred thousand troops which he would lead.

The army was ready in the seventh month, the early autumn, in the twenty-third year (AD 218), and marched in three divisions. The leading division was under Xiahou Dun, Cao Cao commanded the center, and Cao Xiu was the rear guard.

Cao Cao rode a white horse, beautifully caparisoned. His guards were clad in embroidered silk. They carried the huge, red parasol woven of silk and gold threads. Beside him in two lines were the symbols of kingly dignity: the golden melons, silver axes, stirrups, clubs, spears, and lances, banderoles embroidered with the sun and moon, dragon and phoenix; all were borne aloft. His imperial escort of twenty-five thousand stout warriors, led by bold officers, marched in five columns of five thousand each under banners of the five colors, blue, yellow, red, white, and black. The five

companies made a brave show as they marched, each column under its own flag, with soldiers in armors and horses in caparisons all of one color and all glittering in the sun.

As they debouched through Tong Pass, Cao Cao noticed in the distance a thick wood, very luxuriant, and asked those near him what it was called.

“This place is the Indigo Field,” they replied. “And in that wood is the estate of the late Minister Cai Yong. His daughter, Cai Yan, and her present husband, Dong Si, live there.”

Now Cao Cao and Cai Yong had been excellent friends at one time. Cai Yong’s daughter had been first married to Wei Zhongdao. Then she was abducted by the frontier tribes and taken away to the north, where she had borne two sons. She had composed a ballad called “Eighteen Stanzas for the Mongol Flageolet,” which was widespread to the empire. Cao Cao had been moved by pity for her sorrows and sent a messenger with a thousand ounces of gold to ransom her. The Prince of the frontier Xiongnu State, Ce Xian the Khan, overawed by Cao Cao’s strength, had restored her to Cai Yong. Then Cao Cao gave her in marriage to Dong Si.

Ordering his escort to march on, Cao Cao went up to the gate with only a few attendants, dismounted, and inquired after the lady of the house. At this time, Dong Si was absent at his post and the lady was alone. As soon as she heard who her visitor was, she hastened to welcome him and led him into the reception room. When Cao Cao was seated and she had performed the proper salutations, she stood respectfully at his side. Glancing round the room, Cao Cao saw a rubbing of a tablet hanging on the wall. So he got up to read it, and asked his hostess about it.

“It is a tablet of Cao E, or the fair Lady Cao. In the time of the Emperor He (AD 100), in the Xiongnu State there was a certain magician named Cao Xu, who could dance and sing like the very Spirit of Music. On

the fifth of the fifth month, he was out in a boat and, being intoxicated, fell overboard and was drowned. He had a daughter, Cao E, then fourteen years of age. She was greatly distressed and sought the body of her father for seven days and nights, weeping all the while. Then she threw herself into the waves, and five days later she floated to the surface with her father's body in her arms. The villagers buried them on the bank, and the magistrate reported the occurrence to the Emperor as a worthy instance of daughterly affection and remarkable piety.

“A later magistrate had the story inscribed by Handan Chun in memory of the event. At that time, Handan Chun was only thirteen, but the composition of the inscription was so perfect that neither jot nor tittle could be added, and yet he had written it impromptu without revision. The stone was set up beside the grave, and both inscription and story were the admiration of all the people of that day. My father went to see it. It was evening, but in the obscurity, he felt out the inscription with his fingers. He got hold of a pencil and wrote eight large characters on the reverse of the stone and, later, some person recutting the stone engraved these eight words as well.”

Cao Cao then read the eight words; they formed an enigma. Literally they read, “yellow silk, young wife, a daughter's child, pestle and mortar.”

“Can you explain?” asked Cao Cao of his hostess.

“No. Although it is a writing of my father's, thy handmaid cannot interpret it,” she replied.

Turning to the strategists of his staff, Cao Cao said, “Can anyone of you explain it?”

But no one made any reply. Suddenly, they heard one voice, “I have grasped the meaning of it.”

The man who said he had fathomed the meaning was First Secretary Yang Xiu.

“Do not tell me yet. Let me think it out,” said Cao Cao.

Soon after, they took leave of the lady, went out of the farm, and rode on. About one mile from the farm, the meaning suddenly dawned upon Cao Cao.

He laughingly turned to Yang Xiu, saying, “Now, you may try.”

“This is the solution of the enigma,” said Yang Xiu. “‘Yellow silk’ is silk threads of natural color, and the character for ‘silk’ placed beside that for ‘color’ forms a word meaning ‘finally, decidedly.’ The ‘young wife’ is a ‘little female,’ and the character for ‘female’ with ‘little,’ or ‘few,’ placed beside it forms a word meaning ‘admirable, fine.’ The ‘daughter’s child’ is ‘daughter’ and ‘child,’ which side by side make the word ‘good.’ And a ‘pestle and mortar’ suggest pounding together the five bitter herbs in a receptacle: the character for ‘receptacle’ and ‘bitter’ form a word meaning ‘to tell.’ So the four words are ‘Decidedly fine and well-told.’”

Cao Cao was astonished at Yang Xiu’s cleverness and said, “Just what I made it.”

Those around greatly wondered at Yang Xiu’s ingenuity and knowledge.

In less than a day, they reached Nanzheng, where Cao Hong welcomed them. He told the tale of Zhang He’s misfortunes.

“To suffer defeat is no crime,” said Cao Cao. “That and victory are things that happen constantly in war.”

“Liu Bei has sent Huang Zhong to take Dingjun Mountain,” said Cao Hong. “Xiahou Yuan, hearing you were coming, O Prince, has been defending the position and not going out to give battle.”

“But standing always on the defensive is showing weakness,” said Cao Cao.

Thereupon, he bade a man carry an authority ensign to the Mountain Commander and so order him to attack the enemy.

“Xiahou Yuan is very stern and inflexible, and he may be carried too far and fall victim to some vile ruse,” said Liu Ye.

Wherefore, the Prince wrote a letter to him to accompany the authority ensign. And when the messenger arrived and the letter was opened, it read:

“Every leader must exercise a combination of inflexibility and yielding. Boldness is not the only thing that counts; if he makes it so, then is he a mere creature to fight. Now I am camped at Nanzheng, ready to watch the deeds of your admirable prowess and capacity, and all I have to say is, ‘Do not disgrace your previous reputation.’”

The letter pleased the commander mightily. Having sent away the bearer, Xiahou Yuan called in Zhang He to consult.

“The Prince has a great army at Nanzheng ready to destroy Liu Bei. We have been on the defense here long enough, and it is time we rendered some solid service. Tomorrow I am going out to battle, and hope to capture Huang Zhong.”

“Your opponent combines ready resource with boldness and prevision,” said Zhang He. “Beside, he has Fa Zheng to aid him; you must be cautious, for the country is very difficult and dangerous. You had better keep on the defensive.”

“How shall we be able to look our prince in the face when other leaders render good services? However, you just keep the hill, and I will go out to battle.”

Then an order was issued asking who would go out to reconnoiter and provoke a battle. Xiahou Shang volunteered.

Xiahou Yuan said to him, “You are not to make a real stand, but merely to begin the fight. You are to lose and not win, for a grand ruse is ready for the enemy.”

He explained his plans, and Xiahou Shang went away with a small column.

Now Huang Zhong and his helper, Fa Zheng, were camped quite close to the Dingjun Mountain. They had endeavored to entice Xiahou Yuan out into the field to fight, but failed to attack him as he stood in that difficult, mountainous country. So thus far, no advance had been made. But as soon as Xiahou Shang’s troops appeared and seemed to offer battle, Huang Zhong was ready to march out to meet them at once. But General Chen Shi, offered his services.

“Do not trouble yourself to move, O General,” said Chen Shi, “for I will go out to fight them.”

Huang Zhong consented, and placed three thousand troops under Chen Shi, who went out of the valley and set his army in array. And when Xiahou Shang came up and, as arranged, merely fought a few bouts and ran away, Chen Shi followed to take advantage of his success. But he was soon brought to a standstill by the rolling of logs and hurling of stones on the part of his opponents. As he turned to retire, Xiahou Yuan brought out his troops

and attacked. Chen Shi had no chance against them and was quickly made prisoner. Many of his soldiers joined the enemy, but a few escaped to their own side and told Huang Zhong of the misfortune.

Huang Zhong at once asked advice from Fa Zheng, who said, "This Xiahou Yuan is easily provoked to anger, and being angry, he is bold without discretion. Your way now is to work up the enthusiasm of your soldiers, then break camp and advance. Do this in a series of marches, and you will excite him up to the point of giving battle, when you can capture him. They call this the 'Ruse of the Interchange of Host and Guest.'"

So Huang Zhong collected all the things his soldiers liked, and made them presents, till the sound of rejoicing filled the whole valley and the men were hot to fight. Then camp was broken, and the army marched forward a certain distance. Then, they encamped. After some days' rest, the march was repeated, and then again.

When tidings of the advance reached Xiahou Yuan, he proposed to go out and fight.

"No, no," said the prudent Zhang He. "This is a well-known ruse, and you should remain on the defensive. You will lose if you fight."

Xiahou Yuan was not the man to stomach this moderate advice, so he sent out Xiahou Shang to give battle. As soon as this force reached the camp of Huang Zhong, the Veteran General mounted and rode out to fight. In the very first bout, he captured Xiahou Shang. Those who escaped told how their leader had been captured, and Xiahou Yuan at once sent to offer an exchange of prisoners. This was agreed to, to be effected the following day in front of both armies.

So next day, both sides were arrayed in a spot where the valley widened, the two leaders on horseback beneath their respective standards. Beside each stood his prisoner. Neither was encumbered with robe or

helmet, but each wore thin, simple dress. At the first beat of the drum, each started to race over to his own side. Just as Xiahou Shang reached the ranks of his own side, Huang Zhong shot an arrow and wounded him in the back. The wounded man did not fall, but went on.

But Xiahou Yuan, mad with rage, could contain himself no longer. He galloped straight at Huang Zhong, which was exactly what the latter wanted to irritate him into doing. The fight that then ensued went on for twenty bouts, when suddenly the gongs clanged out from Xiahou Yuan's side and he drew off. Huang Zhong pressed on and shattered the army of Wei.

When Xiahou Yuan reached his own side, he asked why the gong had sounded.

"Because we saw the banners of Shu through openings in the mountains in several places, and we feared an ambush," said Zhang He.

Xiahou Yuan believed him and did not return to the battlefield. He simply remained defensive.

Before long, Huang Zhong had gotten quite near to Xiahou Yuan's camp, and then he asked further advice from his colleague.

Fa Zheng pointed over to the hills and said, "There rises a steep hill on the west of Dingjun Mountain, difficult of access, but from its summit, one has a complete view of the defenses of the enemy. If you can take this hill, the mountain lies in the hollow of your hand."

Huang Zhong looked up and saw the top of the hill was a small tableland and there were very few defenders there. So that evening, he left his camp, dashed up the hill, drove out the small host of one hundred under

Xiahou Yuan's General Du Xi and took it. It was just opposite to Dingjun Mountain.

Then, said Fa Zheng, "Now, take up position halfway up the hill, while I go to the top. When the enemy appears, I will show a white flag. But you will remain quiet till the enemy become tired and remiss, when I will hoist a red flag. That will be the signal for attack."

Huang Zhong cheerfully prepared to act on this plan.

In the meantime, Du Xi, who had been driven from the hilltop, had run back and reported the loss of the hill to Xiahou Yuan.

"With Huang Zhong in occupation of that hill, I simply must give battle," said Xiahou Yuan.

Zhang He strongly dissuaded him, saying, "The whole thing is but a ruse of Fa Zheng. General, you had better defend our position."

But Xiahou Yuan was obstinate.

"From the top of that hill, the whole of our position is visible, our strength and our weakness. I must fight."

In vain were the remonstrances repeated. Xiahou Yuan set out his troops to surround the opposite hill and then began to vent his rage at his enemy so as to incite Huang Zhong to give battle.

Then the white flag was hoisted. However, Xiahou Yuan was allowed to fume and rage in vain. He tried every form of insult, but no one appeared. In the afternoon, the soldiers became weary and dispirited. Plainly, their eagerness had gone, and Fa Zheng unfurled the red flag.

Then the drums rolled out, and the men of Shu shouted till the earth seemed to shake as the hoary old leader rode out and led his force down the slope with a roar as of an earthquake. Xiahou Yuan was too surprised to defend himself. His chief enemy rushed straight to his standard. With a

thundering shout, Huang Zhong raised his sword and cleft Xiahou Yuan through between the head and shoulders so that he fell in two pieces.



Hoary headed is he, but he goes up to battle;
Gray-haired, yet recklessly mighty;
With his strong arms he bends the bow,
The arrows fly.
With the swiftness of the wind he rides,
The white sword gleams.
The sound of his voice is as the roar of a tiger,
His steed is fleet as a dragon in flight.
Victory is his and its rich rewards,
For he extends the domain of his lord.



At the death of their general, the soldiers of Wei fled for their lives, and Huang Zhong attacked Dingjun Mountain. Zhang He came out to oppose the army of Shu, but, attacked at two points by Huang Zhong and Chen Shi, he could not stand. He lost the day and fled.

However, before he had gone far, another cohort flashed out from the hills and barred his way. And the leader cried out, “Zhao Yun of Changshan is here!”

Confused and uncertain what to do, Zhang He led his troops toward Dingjun Mountain. But a body of soldiers came out to stop him.

The leader was Du Xi, who said, “The mountain is in the hands of Liu Feng and Meng Da!”

So Zhang He and Du Xi joined their forces and went to the River Han, where they camped. Thence, they sent to tell Cao Cao of their defeat.

At the news of the death of Xiahou Yuan, Cao Cao uttered a great cry, and then he understood the prediction of the soothsayer, Guan Lu, that the cast showed opposition: it was the twenty-fourth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (three and eight cross); the yellow boar (the month Xiahou Yuan died) had met the tiger; the expedition had suffered a loss indeed by the death of a general, and the death had taken place at the mount known as “Army Halt” (Dingjun). The affection between Cao Cao and his general had been very close, for he considered Xiahou Yuan as his limb.

Cao Cao sent to inquire the whereabouts of Guan Lu, but no one knew.

Cao Cao nourished feelings of resentment against the slayer of his friend, and he led his army out against Dingjun Mountain to avenge Xiahou Yuan’s death. Xu Huang led the van. When the army reached the River Han, Zhang He and Du Xi joined them.

They said to Cao Cao, “Dingjun Mountain is lost. Before marching farther, the stores at Micang Mountain should be moved to the Northern Mountain.”

And Cao Cao agreed.

Huang Zhong cut off the head of Xiahou Yuan and took it to Liu Bei when he reported his victory. For these services, Liu Bei conferred upon him the title General Who Conquers the West, and great banquets were given in his honor.

While these were going on, General Zhang Zhu brought the news: “Cao Cao’s army of two hundred thousand troops is on the way to avenge

Xiahou Yuan's loss, and the supplies on Micang Mountain are being moved to the Northern Mountain."

Then said Zhuge Liang, "Cao Cao is certainly short of supplies. If we can burn what he has and destroy his baggage train, he will have but little spirit left to fight."

"I am willing to undertake the task," said Huang Zhong.

"Remember: Cao Cao is a different sort of man from Xiahou Yuan."

Liu Bei said, "Zhang He is the Escort Leader of the train. Though Xiahou Yuan was the Mountain Commander, after all he was but a bold warrior. It would have been ten times better to have killed Zhang He."

"I will go and kill him," said the aged general, firing up.

"Then go with Zhao Yun," said Zhuge Liang. "Act in concert and see who can do best."

Huang Zhong agreed to this condition, and Zhang Zhu was sent with him as Marching General.

Soon after the army had marched out, Zhao Yun asked of his colleague, "What plan have you prepared against Cao Cao's army of two hundred thousand in their ten camps, and how are the stores of grain and forage to be destroyed?"

"I am going to lead," said Huang Zhong.

"No, wait. I am going first," said Zhao Yun.

"But I am the senior leader. You are only my second," said Huang Zhong.

“No. You and I are equal in responsibility and both anxious to render good service. We are no rivals. Let us cast lots for who is to lead the way.”

They did so, and the Veteran General gained precedence.

“Since you have won the right to make the first attempt, you must let me help you,” said Zhao Yun. “Now let us decide upon a fixed time, and if you have returned by that time, I shall not need to stir. But if at that time you have not come back, then I shall come to reinforce you.”

“That suits me admirably,” said Huang Zhong.

So they decided upon noon as the time.

Zhao Yun went back to his own camp, where he called in his Deputy General, Zhang Yi, and said, “My friend Huang Zhong is going to try to burn the stores tomorrow. If he has not returned at noon, I am to go to aid him. You are to guard our camp, which is in a dangerous place by the river, but you are not to move out unless compelled.”

Huang Zhong went back to his camp and said to his general, Zhang Zhu, “I have slain Xiahou Yuan and cowed Zhang He. I am going to destroy the enemy’s store of grain tomorrow, taking with me most of the troops. You are to come and assist me. A meal for the men is to be ready about midnight tonight, and we shall move at the fourth watch. We shall march to the foot of their hill, capture Zhang He, and then start the fire.”

All being ready, they set out, Huang Zhong leading, and stole across the River Han to the foot of the hills. As the sun got up out of the east, they saw before them mountains of grain and only a few guards on watch. These fled at first sight of the army of Shu. The horsemen dismounted and began to collect brushwood and pile it round the grain heaps.

Just as they were starting the fire, there appeared a cohort led by Zhang He, who at once began a fight with Huang Zhong. Then Cao Cao

heard of the fight and sent Xu Huang to help. Xu Huang came up in the rear, and Huang Zhong was surrounded. Zhang Zhu with three thousand troops tried to get away to their camp, but they were intercepted by Wen Ping; more troops of Wei coming up by the rear, Zhang Zhu also was surrounded. Both were in difficulties.

Meanwhile, time passed, and noon came with no news of Huang Zhong. Wherefore Zhao Yun girded on his armor, took three thousand troops with him, and went to his aid. Just as he was leaving, he again warned Zhang Yi to keep good watch.

“Guard the camp most carefully. See that you have archers and crossbowmen on both sides.”

“Yes, yes,” said Zhang Yi.

Zhao Yun rode off, spear in hand, and went out to give battle where he could find the enemy. Soon, he fell in with one of Wen Ping’s companies led by General Murong Lie. Zhao Yun plunged in, cut Murong Lie down, and disposed of the troops of Wei. Then he came to the real press. A cohort barred his way, led by General Jiao Bing.

“Where are the soldiers of Shu?” cried Zhao Yun.

“All killed!” cried Jiao Bing.

Zhao Yun angrily dashed forward and thrust Jiao Bing through so that he died. The cohort scattered, and Zhao Yun went on to the foot of Northern Mountain, where he found Huang Zhong surrounded. With a yell, Zhao Yun dashed at the encircling ring, thrusting this way and shoving that, so that everyone shrank and recoiled before him. The mighty spear laid low his opponents like the whirlwind scatters the petals of the wild pear tree till they lie on the bosom of the earth like snowflakes. Panic seized Zhang He and Xu Huang so that they dared not stand in his way, and thus Zhao Yun

fought his way through and rescued his fellow warrior. Then they fought their way out, and none could withstand them.

Cao Cao had been watching the course of the fighting from a high place, and when he saw a doughty warrior forcing his way into the press and all going down before him, he asked of his officers if they knew who the leader was.

“That is Zhao Yun of Changshan,” replied one who knew.

“So the hero of Dangyang is still alive,” said Cao Cao, marveled.

Then Cao Cao gave general orders to his soldiers not to attack Zhao Yun without being sure of success, no matter where they met him.

Having rescued his colleague and gotten clear of the battle, Zhao Yun was told Zhang Zhu was hemmed in on a hill not far off. Wherefore Zhao Yun went to his relief before going back to his own camp. He had little need to fight, for Cao Cao’s soldiers no sooner saw the name emblazoned on the banners than they fled without more ado.

But it filled Cao Cao with rage to see his troops falling away before Zhao Yun, who marched on as though no one would think of standing in his way, and Cao Cao went in pursuit himself with his officers.

Zhao Yun reached his own camp, where he was welcomed by Zhang Yi. But a cloud of dust was seen in the distance, and they knew Cao Cao was in that cloud and coming upon them.

“Let us bar the gates while we make preparation,” said Zhang Yi.

“Do not bar the gates,” said Zhao Yun. “Have you never heard of my exploit at Dangyang, when I laughed at Cao Cao’s many legions? Now that I have an army at my back and generals to help, what is there to fear?”

Then, Zhao Yun placed the archers and the bowmen in a covered position outside, while he threw down all the weapons and flags within. And no drums beat. But he himself, alone, stood outside the gate of the camp.

It was dusk when Zhang He and Xu Huang neared the camp of the army of Shu. They saw that the ensigns and weapons had been overthrown, and no drums beat at their approach. They also saw the lone figure of the doughty warrior at the gate, and then they halted and dared advance no farther.

While they hesitated, Cao Cao arrived and urged his army to march quicker. They answered with a shout and made a dash forward, but they saw the solitary figure at the gate, and every man halted. And before long, one by one they turned about and went away.

Then Zhao Yun gave a signal to his troops to come out of the moat, and the archers and bowmen began to shoot. The soldiers of Cao Cao knew not in the dusk how many their enemies were, but terror seized upon them and they ran, each trying to be first. And as they ran, the drums rolled, and the soldiers of Shu shouted and pursued, till the flight became a perfect rout, and a confused mass of troops reached the banks of the River Han. The press continuing, many soldiers of Cao Cao were forced into the river and were drowned.

Zhao Yun, Huang Zhong, and Zhang Zhu followed close on the heels of the routed army. While Cao Cao was making off with all speed, two other generals of Shu, Liu Feng and Meng Da, came from Micang

Mountain and set fire to all the army stores of food and forage at Northern Mountain.

Cao Cao abandoned the stores at Northern Mountain and set out hastily for Nanzheng. Zhang He and Xu Huang could make no stand, and they also abandoned their camps, which Zhao Yun at once occupied. Beside the stores of food, the victors collected countless weapons along the banks of the river.

They sent news of the victory to Liu Bei, who came with Zhuge Liang to the scene of the victory, and there they heard the full story of Zhao Yun's prowess. Liu Bei was very glad, and when he had seen the steepness and difficulties of the surrounding hills, he understood the fine deeds of valor that had been done.

Turning to Zhuge Liang, Liu Bei said, "Truly, the man is brave all through!"



Behold Zhao Yun of Changshan,
Whose whole body is valor;
Formerly he fought at Dangyang,
And his courage today is no less.
He rushes into the array to manifest heroism;
Surrounded by his enemies,
He is dauntless and daring.
Devils howl and spirits cry,
The sky is afraid and earth trembles.
Such is Zhao Yun, the brave,
Whose whole body is valor.



For his services, Liu Bei gave Zhao Yun the title of General Who Possesses Tiger Prowess. And the soldiers of his army were rewarded, and there was banqueting to a late hour.

Soon, it was reported: “Cao Cao is coming again down through the Xie Valley to try to capture the River Han.”

But Liu Bei laughed, saying, “He will not succeed, for I think that we shall gain command of the river.”

Then Liu Bei led his army west of the river to oppose Cao Cao. When Cao Cao drew near, he sent out Xu Huang to lead the van and open the battle.

A General named Wang Ping said, “I know the country well, and I wish to help General Xu Huang to destroy the army of Shu.”

Wang Ping was sent as second-in-command.

Cao Cao camped on the north of Dingjun Mountain, and his advance guard marched away making for the River Han. And when they reached the bank, Xu Huang gave orders to cross to the other side.

“To cross the river is well,” said Wang Ping, “but what if you have to retreat?”

“Of old, when Han Xin made his array with a river in his rear, he said that out of the place of death one could return to life.”

“You are mistaken now. The cases are not the same, for then Han Xin knew his opponents were unskillful. Have you reckoned upon the skill of our opponents, Zhao Yun and Huang Zhong?”

“You may lead the footmen to hold the enemy while I destroy them with the horsemen,” said Xu Huang.

Then bridges were built, and the army crossed.

A man of Wei wildly quoted Han Xin;
A minister of Shu would be another Zhang Liang?
Who won the victory will next be revealed.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVII

CHAPTER 72

ZHUGE LIANG'S WIT TAKES HANZHONG; CAO CAO'S ARMY RETIRES TO THE YE VALLEY.

In spite of the most earnest dissuasion, Xu Huang crossed the river and camped. Huang Zhong and Zhao Yun asked to be allowed to go against the host of Cao Cao, and Liu Bei gave his consent.

Then said Huang Zhong, "Xu Huang has been bold enough to come. We will not go out against him till evening, when his soldiers are fatigued. Then we will fall upon him one on either side."

Zhao Yun consented, and each retired to a stockade. Xu Huang appeared and for a long time tried to draw them into a fight, but they refused to go forth. Then Xu Huang ordered his bowmen to begin to shoot straight before them, and the arrows and bolts fell in the Shu camp.

Huang Zhong said, "He must be thinking of retreat, or he would not shoot thus. Now is our time to smite him."

Then the scouts reported that the rearmost bodies of the enemy had begun to retreat. The drums of Shu rolled a deafening peal, and Huang Zhong's army from the left and Zhao Yun's army from the right came to the attack, and the double fight began. Xu Huang was badly defeated, and the flying soldiers were forced to the River Han, where many were drowned. But Xu Huang escaped after fighting desperately, and when he got back to camp, he blamed his colleague Wang Ping for not having come to his aid.

"Had I done so, these camps would have been left unguarded," said Wang Ping. "I tried to dissuade you from going, but you would not hear me,

and you brought about this reverse yourself.”

Xu Huang, in his wrath, tried to slay Wang Ping, but Wang Ping escaped to his own camp. In the night, Wang Ping set fire to both camps, and great confusion reigned in the lines. Xu Huang ran away, but Wang Ping crossed the river and surrendered to Zhao Yun, who led him to Liu Bei. Wang Ping told Liu Bei all about the River Han and the country nearby.

“I shall surely capture Hanzhong now that you are here to help me, friend Wang Ping,” said Liu Bei.

Liu Bei made Wang Ping General and Army Guide.

Xu Huang reported Wang Ping’s defection, which made Cao Cao very angry. Cao Cao placed himself at the head of a force and tried to retake the bank of the river.

Zhao Yun, thinking his troops too few, retired to the west side, and the two armies lay on opposite sides of the stream. Liu Bei and his adviser came down to view the position. Zhuge Liang saw in the upper course of the stream a hill which might well-screen a thousand soldiers.

So Zhuge Liang returned to camp, called in Zhao Yun, and said, “General, you lead five hundred troops, with drums and horns, and place them in ambush behind the hill to await certain orders which will come sometime during the night or at dawn. When you hear a detonation, you are not to appear, only give a long roll of the drums at every report.”

Zhao Yun departed to play his part in the drama, while Zhuge Liang went to a hill whence he could overlook the scene.

When next the army of Cao Cao approached the camp of Shu and offered battle, not a man came out, nor was an arrow or a bolt shot. They retired without any result. But in the depths of the night, when all the lights in the camp were extinguished and all appeared tranquil and restful, Zhuge Liang exploded a bomb, and at once, Zhao Yun beat his drums and blared his trumpets. Cao Cao's soldiers awoke in alarm, thinking it was a night raid. They rushed out, but there was no enemy, and as the hubbub ceased, they went back to sleep. Soon after, there was another bomb, and again the drums and the trumpets seeming to shake the earth itself and the fearsome roar echoing along the valleys and from the hills again scared Cao Cao's soldiers. Thus the night passed in constant alarms.

The next night was the same, and the next. On the fourth day, Cao Cao broke up his camp, marched his troops ten miles to the rear, and pitched his camp in a clear, wide space among the hills.

Zhuce Liang was pleased at the result of his ruse. Said he, smiling, "Cao Cao is skilled in war, but still he is not proof against all deceitful tricks."

The troops of Shu then crossed the river and camped with the stream behind them. When Liu Bei asked the next move, he was told, but also told to keep the plan a secret.

Seeing Liu Bei thus encamped, Cao Cao became doubtful and anxious, and, to bring things to a decision, he sent a written declaration of war, to which Zhuge Liang replied that they would fight a battle on the morrow.

On the morrow, the armies faced each other halfway between the two camps in front of the Mountain of Five Borders, and there they arrayed. Cao

Cao presently rode up stood beside his banner, with his officers right and left and the dragon and phoenix banners fluttering in the wind. His drums rolled thrice, and then he summoned Liu Bei to a parley. Liu Bei rode out supported by Liu Feng, Meng Da, and other leaders. Then Cao Cao insolently flourished his whip and vilified his opponent.

“Liu Bei, you have forgotten kindness and lost the sense of right. You are a rebel against the government.”

Liu Bei answered, “I am related to the imperial family, and I hold an edict authorizing me to seize all rebels. You have dared to lift up your hand against Empress Fu, made yourself a king, and arrogantly presume to an imperial chariot. If you are not a rebel, what are you?”

Then Cao Cao ordered Xu Huang out to give battle, and Liu Feng went to meet him. As the combat began, Liu Bei retired within the ranks of his array. Liu Feng was no match for his opponent and fled.

Cao Cao issued an order to capture Liu Bei, saying, “He who captures Liu Bei will be made Prince of Hanzhong!”

At this, the army of Wei uttered one great roar of rage, then they came surging on. The troops of Shu fled toward the river, abandoning everything, even throwing aside their weapons, which littered the road. But as Cao Cao’s army pressed forward, he suddenly clanged the gongs, called a halt and drew off.

“Why did you call us off, O Prince, just as we were on the point of success?” said his commanders.

“Because I saw the enemy had encamped with the river in their rear, which was very suspicious. They also abandoned their steeds and weapons, which made me doubt. Wherefore, I could only retire. But retain your

armor. Let not a person take off his harness on pain of death. Now retire as quickly as you can march.”

As Cao Cao turned about to retire, Zhuge Liang hoisted the signal to attack, and the retreating soldiers were harassed on every side both night and day till they were all disordered. Cao Cao ordered his army to retire to Nanzheng.

Presently, they saw flames rising all around, and soon it was known that their city of refuge was in the hands Zhang Fei and Wei Yan, who, after Yan Yan had taken the command of Langzhong, had launched a double-attack and captured Nanzheng.

Disappointed and saddened, Cao Cao bade them march to Yangping Pass. Liu Bei with the main army followed them to Baozhou and Nanzheng and, there, pacified the people and restored confidence.

“Cao Cao was exceedingly quickly overcome this time,” said Liu Bei. “How was that?”

“He has always been of a suspicious nature,” said Zhuge Liang, “and that has led to many failures although he is a good leader of armies. I have defeated him by playing upon his doubts.”

“He is rather weakened now,” said Liu Bei. “Can you not devise a plan to drive him away finally?”

“That is all thought out.”

Next Zhang Fei and Wei Yan were sent along two different roads to cut off Cao Cao’s supplies. Two other cohorts, led by Huang Zhong and Zhao Yun, were bidden to go and burn the hills and forests. All these four armies had natives of the place to act as guides and show the way.

Cao Cao's scouts sent out from Yangping Pass returned to report: "The roads far and near are blocked by the troops of Shu, and every place seems to be burning. No soldier is seen."

Cao Cao knew not what to do. Then other scouts told him, "Our stores are being plundered by Zhang Fei and Wei Yan."

At this, Cao Cao called for a volunteer to drive off the plunderers, and Xu Chu offered. He was given a thousand veterans, and went down the Pass to act as escort of the grain wagons.

The officers in charge of the transport were very glad to receive a general of such renown.

"Except for you, O General, the grain could never reach Yangping Pass."

They entertained Xu Chu with the wine and food on the carts, and he ate and drank copiously so that he became very intoxicated. And in that state he insisted on marching, urging the convoy to start at once.

"The sun has nearly set," said the transport officers, "and the road near Baozhou is bad and dangerous, so that we cannot pass there at night."

"I can face any danger," boasted the drunken general. "I am brave as a myriad men put together. What do you think I fear? Beside, there is a good moon tonight, just the sort of thing to take grain carts along by."

Xu Chu took the lead, sword in hand. By the second watch, they were passing Baozhou. About half the train had passed when the rolling of drums and the blare of horns came down to them through a rift in the hills. They were soon followed by the appearance of a cohort led by Zhang Fei. With spear ready, he came racing down straight for Xu Chu, who, whirling his sword, dashed to the front to meet the enemy.

But Xu Chu was too drunk to stand against such a warrior. After a few bouts, he received a spear thrust in the shoulder, turned round in his saddle, and fell from his horse. His men rushed to his help, and they carried him away as they retreated, while Zhang Fei took the whole transport train of fodder and forage away to his own camp.

The defeated escort carried their wounded leader back to Cao Cao's camp, where he was placed in the care of physicians.

Then, Cao Cao himself led out his army to fight a decisive battle with the army of Shu. Liu Bei went out to meet him, and, when both sides were arrayed, Liu Feng went out to challenge. Cao Cao at once let loose a torrent of taunts and reproaches.

"Seller of shoes, you are always sending out this pretended son of yours to fight for you! If I only call my golden-bearded son Cao Zhang, your so-called son will be chopped to mincemeat!"

These words enraged Liu Feng, who raised his spear and galloped toward Cao Cao. Cao Cao bade Xu Huang do battle with the young man, and Liu Feng at once ran away. Cao Cao led on his legions, but he was harassed by the explosion of bombs, the beating of drums, and the blare of trumpets that came from every side. He concluded that he was being led into an ambush, and he hastened to retire. The retreat was unfortunate, for the soldiers trampled upon each other and many were killed. Anon, they all ran off to Yangping Pass as quickly as they could.

But the soldiers of Shu came right up to the walls of the Pass, and some burned the east gate while others shouted at the west. Others, again, burned the north gate while drums rolled at the south. Leaders and led were alike harassed and frightened, and presently they left the Pass and ran away. They were pursued and sore-smitten.

The road to safety was not easy. In one direction, Zhang Fei barred the way, while Zhao Yun attacked the rear. Then Huang Zhong came from Baozhou and pressed a slaughter on the flank. Cao Cao's army lost many troops, and he was severely defeated in this triple attack. His commanders gathered about him and took him off toward the Xie Valley. Here, a great cloud of dust was seen in the distance.

"If that is an ambush, it is the last of me," sighed Cao Cao.

The soldiers came nearer, and then Cao Cao recognized not a enemy but his second son, Cao Zhang.

As a lad, Cao Zhang had been a good horseman and an expert archer. He was more powerful than most men and could overcome a wild beast with his bare hands. Cao Cao did not approve of the young man's bent and often warned him to study instead.

"You do not study, but only love your bow and your horse; this is the courage of a mere person. Think you that this makes for an honorable career?"

But Cao Zhang replied, "The really noble person ought to imitate such grand men as Wei Qing and Huo Qubing. They won their reputation in the Gobi Desert, where they led a mighty host of hundred thousand, able to overrun the whole world and go anywhere. What have I to do with scholarship?"

Cao Cao used to ask his sons what career they found admirable, and Cao Zhang always replied that he would be a leader of armies.

"But what should a leader be like?" asked Cao Cao.

“He should be endued with firmness and courage, never turn aside from a difficulty, but be in the van of his officers and troops. Rewards should be certain, and so should punishments.”

Cao Cao smiled with pleasure.

In the twenty-third year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 218), the Wuhuan Peoples revolted in Daichun, and Cao Cao sent this son with fifty thousand troops to suppress them. Just as Cao Zhang was leaving, his father read him a homily on his duty.

“At home, we are father and son, but when a task is given you, you have to consider your duty as a servant of your ruler. The law knows no kindness, and you must beware.”

When the expedition reached the north of Daichun, Cao Zhang led the array and smote as far as Sanggan in the Gobi Desert, and peace was restored. He had lately heard that his father was at Yangping Pass and had come to help him to fight.

His coming greatly pleased his father, who said, “Now that my golden-bearded son has arrived, we can destroy Liu Bei for certain.”

Then the army was marched back again and pitched camp at the Xie Valley.

Someone told Liu Bei of the arrival of Cao Zhang, and he asked for a volunteer to go out against the newcomer. Liu Feng offered. Meng Da also desired to go, and Liu Bei decided to let both go.

“Vie with each other,” said he.

Each general had five thousand troops, and Liu Feng led the way. Cao Zhang rode out and engaged him, and in the third bout, Liu Feng was overcome and ran off. Then Meng Da advanced, and a battle was just beginning when he saw that Cao Cao’s troops were in confusion. The cause was the sudden coming of Ma Chao and Wu Lan. Before the enemy had recovered from the panic, Meng Da attacked on another side. Ma Chao’s force, who had been nursing their courage for a long time, fought brilliantly, so that none could withstand their onslaught, and they won the day. But in his flight, Cao Zhang met Wu Lan, and he thrust and slew Wu Lan with his spear.

After a great fight, Cao Cao ordered his army to retire into camp at the Xie Valley. Here he remained many days, prevented from advancing by Ma Chao and fearing the ridicule of Shu if he should retreat.

One day, while he was anxiously trying to decide what to do, his cook sent in some chicken broth. He noticed in the broth some chicken tendons, and this simple fact led him into a train of reflection. He was still deep in thought when Xiahou Dun entered his tent to ask the watchword for that night.

Cao Cao at once involuntarily replied, “Chicken tendon.”

The word was passed on in orders. When First Secretary Yang Xiu saw the order that the watchword was “chicken tendon,” he told all his people to pack up their belongings ready for the march. One who saw this went and told Xiahou Dun, who sent for Yang Xiu and asked why he had packed up.

Yang Xiu replied, “By tonight’s orders I see that the Prince of Wei is soon going to retire. ‘Chicken tendons’ are tasteless things to eat, and yet it is a pity to waste them. Now if we advance, we cannot conquer, and if we retire, we fear we shall look ridiculous. There being no advantage here, the

best course is to retire. You will certainly see the Prince of Wei retreat before long. I have made my preparations so as not to be hurried and confused at the last moment.”

“You seem to know the Prince’s inmost heart,” said Xiahou Dun, and he bade his servants pack. The other generals, seeing this, also made preparations for departure.

Cao Cao’s mind was too perturbed for sleep. In the night, he got up, took a steel battleax in his hand, and wandered privily through the camp. When he got to Xiahou Dun’s tents, he saw everything packed and ready for a move. Much surprised, he made his way back to his own tent and sent for that officer.

“Why is everything in your camp packed as if ready for the march?”

“First Secretary Yang Xiu seems to have private knowledge of the Prince’s design to retire,” said Xiahou Dun.

Cao Cao summoned Yang Xiu and questioned him, and Yang Xiu replied with the chicken tendon incident.

“How dare you invent such a story and disturb the hearts of my army?”

Cao Cao called in his lictors and told them to take Yang Xiu away and behead him and hang his head at the camp gate.

Yang Xiu was a man of acute and ingenious mind, but inclined to show off. His lack of restraint over his tongue had often wounded Cao Cao’s susceptibilities. Once, Cao Cao was having a pleasance laid out, and when it was completed, he went to inspect the work. He uttered no word of praise or blame; he just wrote the word “Alive” on the gate and left. Nobody could guess what he meant till Yang Xiu heard of it.

“‘Gate’ with ‘Alive’ inside it makes the word for ‘wide,’” said he. “The Prime Minister thinks the gates are too wide.”

Thereupon, they rebuilt the outer walls on an altered plan. When complete, Cao Cao was asked to go and see it. And he was then delighted.

“But who guessed what I meant?” said he.

“Yang Xiu,” replied his people.

Cao Cao thereafter lauded Yang Xiu’s ingenuity, but in his heart he feared.

Another time, Cao Cao received a box of cream cheese from Mongolia. Cao Cao just scribbled three words, “One Cream Box,” on the top and left it on the table. The words seemed to have no meaning. But Yang Xiu happened to come in, saw the box, and at once handed a spoonful of the contents to each guest in the room. When Cao Cao asked why he did this, he explained that that was the interpretation of the words on the box, which, resolved into primary symbols, read, “Each person a mouthful.”

“Could I possibly disobey your orders?” said he.

Cao Cao laughed with the others, but hatred was in his heart.

Cao Cao lived in constant fear of assassination, and said to his attendants, “Let none of you come near me when I am sleeping, for I am likely to slay people in my dreams.”

One day, he was enjoying a rest, and his quilt fell off. One of the attendants saw it and hastened to cover him again. Cao Cao suddenly leaped from the couch, cut down the intruder with his sword, and lay down again to sleep. Some time after, he awoke, simulated surprise, and asked who had killed his attendant. When they told him, Cao Cao wept aloud for the dead man and had him buried in a fine grave. Most people thought that Cao Cao had slain the man while asleep, but Yang Xiu knew better.

At the funeral of the victim, Yang Xiu remarked, “The Prime Minister was in no dream, but only you were asleep.”

This only increased the hatred.

Cao Cao’s third son, Cao Zhi, took great delight in Yang Xiu’s cleverness and often invited him, when they would talk the whole night.

When Cao Cao was considering the nomination of his heir and desired to name Cao Zhi, Cao Pi got to hear of the proposal to set him aside in favor of his younger brother, so he secretly requested the Master of the Court Singers, Wu Zhi, to come and discuss this matter. Then, fearing that someone might see his visitor, Cao Pi got a large basket made, in which his friend was smuggled into the Palace. Cao Pi gave out that the basket contained rolls of silk. Yang Xiu heard the truth and informed Cao Cao, who sent guards to watch at the gates.

Cao Pi, in alarm, told Wu Zhi, who said, “Be not afraid, but fill a basket actually with rolls of silk on the morrow and have it carried in as before.”

The searchers peeped into the basket and found the rolls of silk. They told Cao Cao the result of their search, and Cao Cao began to think Yang Xiu was plotting against his son. This also added to his hatred.

Another time, Cao Cao, wishing to compare the abilities of his two sons Cao Pi and Cao Zhi, told them both to go out of the city, at the same time ordering the gate wardens to forbid their exit. Cao Pi first came to the gate, was stopped by the wardens, and returned to his palace.

But his brother Cao Zhi consulted Yang Xiu, who said, “You have received orders from the Prince to go out. Simply cut down any who may try to prevent you.”

When Cao Zhi went to the gate and was stopped, he shouted out to the wardens, “I have the Prince’s order to go out. Dare you stop me?”

He slew the man who would have prevented him. Wherefore Cao Cao considered his younger son the more able. But when some other person told him that the device came from Yang Xiu, he was angry and took a dislike to his son Cao Zhi.

Yang Xiu also used to coach Cao Zhi in preparing replies to likely questions, which were learned by heart and quoted when necessary. Cao Cao was always asking this son his opinion on military matters, and Cao Zhi always had a fluent reply ready. His father was not without suspicions, which were turned into certainties when Cao Pi gave his father the written replies which Cao Pi had bribed a servant to filch from his brother’s apartments. Cao Cao was quite angry.

“How dare he throw dust in my eyes like this?” said Cao Cao.

Yang Xiu very nearly lost his life for his share in that business. Now, sending him to execution on the charge of destroying the morale of the soldiers was only a subterfuge. Yang Xiu was but thirty-four when he met his end.



Talented was Yang Xiu,
Born of an illustrious stock,
His pen traced wonderful characters,
In his breast were beautiful words.
When he talked, his hearers were astonished,
His alert responses overpassed everyone.
He died because of misdirected genius

And not because he foretold retreat.

Cao Cao thus put to death the prime mover and simulated anger against Xiahou Dun. He threatened to execute Xiahou Dun, but listened to those who begged him to show mercy.

“Get out of this place!” said he.

Next, he issued an order to advance on the morrow. The army moved out of the valley and came face-to-face with the troops of Shu led by Wei Yan. He summoned Wei Yan to surrender, but received abuse and contumely in return.

Pang De went out to fight Wei Yan. But while the combat was in progress, fires broke out in Cao Cao’s camp, and a soldier came flying to say that the rear and center camps had been seized by Ma Chao.

Fearing lest this should lead to a rout, he drew his sword and stood before the army, crying out, “Death for any officer who flinches!”

Wherefore the men of Wei pressed forward valiantly, and Wei Yan, pretending defeat, retreated. Having driven back this army, Cao Cao gave the signal to turn toward camp and fight with Ma Chao. He took up his station on the top of a hill whence he could survey the field.

Suddenly, a cohort appeared just below him, and the leader cried, “Wei Yan is here!”

Wei Yan fitted an arrow to his bow, shot, and wounded Cao Cao right in his lip. Cao Cao turned and fell. Wei Yan threw aside his bow, seized his sword, and came charging up the hill to finish his enemy. But with a shouting, Pang De flashed in.

“Spare my lord!” cried Pang De.

He rushed up and drove Wei Yan backward. Then they took Cao Cao away. Ma Chao also retired, and the wounded prince slowly returned to his own camp.

Cao Cao was wounded full in the face, and the arrow had knocked out two of his front teeth. When in the hands of the physicians, he lay thinking over Yang Xiu’s words. In a repentant mood, he had Yang Xiu’s remains decently interred.

Then he gave the order to retreat. Pang De was the rear guard. Cao Cao set out homeward in a padded carriage, escorted by his Tiger Guards.

Before they had gone far, there was an alarm of fire and ambush in the Xie Valley. The soldiers of Wei were all fear-stricken.

That was something like the danger once at Tong Pass
met,
Or like the fight at the Red Cliffs which no one could
ever forget.

How Cao Cao fared will next be told.



END OF ACT XVII

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
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ACT XVIII:

THE GOD OF WAR ASCENDS:

THE BATTLE OF FANCHENG

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVIII

CHAPTER 73

LIU BEI BECOMES THE PRINCE OF HANZHONG; GUAN YU MARCHES TO
ATTACK XIANGYANG.

When Cao Cao retired to the Xie Valley, Zhuge Liang considered it to mean the abandonment of his attempt to acquire possession of Hanzhong. So Zhuge Liang sent out Ma Chao and a dozen parties to harass and hasten Cao Cao's retreat. For this reason, the retreating army had to keep on the move. Beside, Cao Cao was suffering from his wound, and he marched as hurriedly as possible.

But it was a dejected army, when the leading legions encountered fire on both flanks, which had been raised by troops placed in ambush while Ma Chao's main force kept driving the army before it. Everyone in Cao Cao's army was dispirited, and there was no more courage in them. They pressed forward day and night alike without halting to rest. It was only after reaching Jingzhao that they had some repose.

Having conquered Hanzhong, Liu Bei sent Liu Feng, Meng Da, and Wang Ping to take Shangyong. The Commander of the city, Shen Dan, and his colleagues, knowing that Cao Cao had retreated, offered their submission. After confidence had been restored among the people, Liu Bei rewarded his army generously, and they were all joyful.

It was after this that the general body of the officers decided to urge Liu Bei to assume the title of “Emperor,” but they dared not tell him so. However, they sent up a petition to Zhuge Liang.

He replied, “I have already decided on this course.”

So Zhuge Liang and Fa Zheng headed a deputation that went in to see their lord.

They said, “Now that Cao Cao really holds the reins of authority, the people are without a true sovereign. Our lord, your kindness and sense of justice have spread throughout the empire. You have restored peace over the two River Lands, and your becoming an emperor would be according to God’s will and the desire of the people. Then, by right and title, you could destroy rebels. This matter should not be delayed, and we pray you choose the auspicious day.”

But Liu Bei evinced great surprise and replied, “Your words, O Instructor, are wrong. Although I am of the imperial house, I am yet but a minister. And to do this thing would be rebellion against Han.”

Zhuce Liang replied, “Not so. Today the empire is riven, and many of the bolder spirits have seized upon and claim the rule of various portions. The talented of the empire and the virtuous among officers, who have risked death and lost their lives in serving those above them, all desire to have the opportunity of serving a true emperor and doing service for a true Throne. Now if you insist on modestly maintaining your righteous way, I fear that you will lose popular support. My lord, I wish that you would reflect upon this.”

“But you desire me to usurp a place of great honor in the state, and I dare not. Let there be more delay and discussion.”

But with one voice they said, “Our lord, if you reject this, the hearts of the people will turn from you!”

“My lord,” said Zhuge Liang, “you have made rectitude your motto all your life. If you really object to the most honored title, then, since you have Jingzhou, Yizhou, and Hanzhong, take temporarily the title of ‘Prince of Hanzhong.’”

“Gentlemen, though you may desire to honor me by the title of Prince, without an edict from the Emperor, such action would be usurpation.”

Said Zhuge Liang, “The time demands recognition of the actual state of authority and not a rigid adherence to all the rules of propriety.”

And Zhang Fei roared out, “All sorts of people with all sorts of names are making themselves rulers; how much more ought you, Brother, who are of the dynastic stock? It ought not to be Prince of Hanzhong but Emperor. What prevents it?”

“Brother, say no more,” said Liu Bei roughly.

“My lord,” said Zhuge Liang, “it is fitting to follow political changes and suit one’s conduct to circumstances. Wherefore, first take the princedom and then memorialize the Throne.”

Liu Bei declined two or three times, but as there seemed no other option, he listened and complied.

In the twenty-fourth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 219), in the seventh month, an altar was set up at Mianyang, half a square mile, which was set around with the proper flags and banners and symbols. In the presence of all his civil and military officers assembled according to their rank, and at the request of the two Ministers Xu Jing and Fa Zheng, Liu Bei received the headdress and seat of a prince. Then he took his seat, facing the south as a ruler should, and received the salutes and felicitations of all

his officers as the Prince of Hanzhong. And his son Liu Shan was nominated his heir-apparent.

Xu Jing was given the title of Imperial Guardian; Fa Zheng that of Chair of the Secretariat. Zhuge Liang was reappointed Directing Instructor of the Forces, with the additional powers of control over the whole state policy. Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun, Huang Zhong, and Ma Chao were the Five Tiger Generals. Wei Yan was made Governor of Hanzhong, and all the others who had assisted were given ranks and offices.

As soon as the investiture was completed, Liu Bei composed a memorial and sent it to Capital Xuchang. This is the document:

“I, Liu Bei, have but ordinary talents, yet was I made a general of high rank and led a great army. Though I received a commission to purge the empire of rebels, I was unable to cleanse it and so renew the tranquility to Your Majesty’s house and restore the dynasty. Too long have I delayed to spread Your Majesty’s sacred governance. The world is evil and not in good case, and as I sorrowfully think it over and over, I am distressed as one in severe pain.

“Rebellion began with Dong Zhuo, and all kinds of evils have spread abroad; cruelty and ferocity have become rife. Strong in faith in Your Majesty’s sacred virtue and inspiring presence, many banded together to help. The loyal exerted themselves to destroy the rebels, but others of them were smitten of Heaven. The fierce and the contumacious have been exterminated, and gradually rebellion has melted away.

“Only Cao Cao now remains, too long unpunished. He has arrogated to himself the authority of the state. His wicked heart is very

rebellious. Once, I, with General Dong Cheng, the State Uncle, conspired against him, but the plot was discovered and my fellow conspirator suffered. Thenceforward, I was a wanderer, and my loyalty availed nothing. It only allowed Cao Cao further license and liberty to do evil, till he dared even to accomplish the death of the Empress and the destruction of her sons. Although we might band together and form associations, with all our energy, we had to recognize that we were too weak for war. Wherefore the years passed and nothing was accomplished. In constant fear of destruction, we even fear more lest our duty to the state be forgotten. Waking and sleeping we sighed, and our nights were times of anxiety.

“Now, my fellows consider that history has repeated itself. They attach the utmost importance to the family and would manifest it with all their might. Hereditary succession of rulers is still a principle. The rulers of Zhou, taking the two preceding dynasties as models, strengthened their clan’s position through all the states, and it reinforced itself with the support of the states of Jing and Zheng. When the great Founder of Han came into his own, he ennobled his whole family with kingships and lordships. Later, the dynasty had to issue a general command throughout the whole of the nine regions in order to destroy the widespread Lu Family and to enhance the Liu Family.

“Now Cao Cao is an enemy of all rectitude, and his followers are all evil. His treachery is manifest. Since the members of the imperial clan are few and weak, the clan is not honored. Having reflected upon the ancient models and being desirous of temporary alleviation, my fellows have made me assume the title of Prince of Hanzhong with the addition of Regent Marshal.

“I have deeply considered these things. If one receives kindness from the Throne and accepts the responsibility for a portion of the state and fails, then such a fault would only be made the more serious by holding high rank and thereby increasing the burden of reproach. But my fellows have urged me, and they have convinced me that it would be right, and, should I refuse, the wicked will not be destroyed and the danger to the state will not be removed. The temple of our ancestors is in danger, and the imperial prerogatives are failing. A faithful servant, who in the day of tribulation can undertake a suitable policy whereby to preserve the dynasty, should not refuse his help at any cost. Wherefore I have yielded and accepted the position for the glory of the state.

“Humbly I think of such a title and its exalted position and the favor vouchsafed me, and I would endeavor to show true gratitude. My anxiety is deep, for the responsibility is heavy. I am as one on the brink of a great gulf. I must surely exert myself to the utmost and encourage my armies and lead all disciples of rectitude, in accordance with the will of Heaven and as occasion serves, to smite rebellion so as to restore the dynasty.”

When the memorial reached Capital Xuchang, Cao Cao was in the Palace at Yejun, and it annoyed him greatly.

“How dare this mean weaver of straw shoes behave thus?” said he. “Now I swear that I will destroy him.”

So he issued orders for the whole force of the state to go out against the two River Lands to wage fierce war with the new Prince of Hanzhong.

But a remonstrance came from the mouth of one man.

“Let not the great Prince of Wei trouble himself to go on a distant expedition because of a temporary annoyance. I can propose a plan of which the execution will need not the bending of a single bow, and yet it will make Liu Bei bring down disaster upon his own head. When his army shall have become exhausted, it will only be necessary to send one single general against him, and victory will be ours.”

Cao Cao looked at the officer. It was First Secretary Sima Yi.

“What is your exalted view, my friend?” said Cao Cao.

“Sun Quan’s sister is wife to Liu Bei, but Sun Quan has found an occasion to steal away the bride. Liu Bei is in possession of Jingzhou still, and he and Sun Quan are bitter enemies. Therefore, send some able speaker with a letter to Wu to persuade the Marquis to send an army to recover Jingzhou. That will draw thither all the armies of Shu, when you can send your army to Hanzhong. Liu Bei will be helpless, and his strength will be wasted.”

The scheme pleased Cao Cao. He at once drew up a letter and sent it by the hand of Man Chong, who soon arrived in Wu. As soon as Sun Quan knew of the mission, he summoned his advisers to consult.

Zhang Zhao said, “Wei and Wu are primarily enemies because of the dissension fomented by the words of Zhuge Liang. We have been fighting for several years, and many lives have been lost. Now this messenger has surely come to discuss terms of friendship, and he should be welcomed.”

On the strength of this, Man Chong was well-received and conducted into the city and into the presence of Sun Quan. He presented his letters at the conclusion of the ceremonies of reception and declared his mission.

“Wu and Wei have no fundamental quarrel, and their dissension has been brought about by Liu Bei. My master sends me to covenant with you for an attack on Jingzhou, while he goes against Hanzhong. This double attack being successful, the conquered regions can be divided between us two, and we can both swear to respect each other’s territory.”

Having read the letter, Sun Quan prepared a banquet in honor of Man Chong and then sent him to the guesthouse to rest while he discussed the matter with his council of advisers.

Said Gu Yong, “Although the messenger’s speech was all specious pleading, it was correct in form. I propose that the messenger be allowed to return and that a covenant be made with Cao Cao for joint attack. In addition, let spies be sent over the Great River to find out Guan Yu’s movements, and then we may act.”

Zhuge Jin said, “I hear that since Guan Yu has been in Jingzhou, Liu Bei has found him a wife, who has borne him a son and a daughter. The daughter is too young to have been betrothed, wherefore let me go to ask her in marriage with your heir. If Guan Yu agrees, then we can arrange with him to attack Cao Cao. If Guan Yu refuses, then let us aid Cao Cao in an attack on Jingzhou.”

Sun Quan took this advice. So he sent Man Chong away and sent Zhuge Jin to Jingzhou to try to arrange the betrothal. Zhuge Jin was received.

When the time came to state the reason for his coming, Guan Yu asked him, “What have you come for, Zhuge Jin?”

“I have come seeking to ally the two houses. My master, the Marquis of Wu, has a son who is quite clever. Hearing that you have a daughter, General, I ask her in marriage, whereby the two houses may join in an

attack on Cao Cao. This would be an admirable result, and I pray you consider the proposal.”

But the warrior flared up. “How can a tiger’s daughter marry with a dog’s whelp? Were it not for your brother, I would take your head. Say no more!”

Guan Yu called his servants to hustle forth the hapless messenger, who ran away with his hands over his head, too astonished to look anyone in the face. And reaching his own place, he dared not hide the manner of his reception, but told the whole truth.

“What ruffianism!” exclaimed the Marquis.

Thereupon, Sun Quan ordered the council again to consider an attack on Jingzhou.

Bu Zhi rose and said, “It has been long apparent that Cao Cao wishes to usurp the Throne, but he is afraid of Liu Bei. Now we are to attack Shu with an army, and so Cao Cao wants to shift the misfortune to us indeed.”

“But I also want the place,” said Sun Quan.

Said Bu Zhi, “Cao Ren is already camped at Fancheng and Xiangyang and in no danger from the river. If Cao Cao can take Jingzhou by land, why does he not take it? However, he wants you, my lord, to send your army, and you can judge his real intention from this. Send to Cao Cao and tell him to make Cao Ren attack by land. Then Guan Yu must take the army from Jingzhou to Fancheng. When Guan Yu has left Jingzhou, you can send an army to seize it.”

Sun Quan thought the scheme good and sent letters with these proposals to Cao Cao. Cao Cao adopted the plan, and having sent the messenger back to the South Land, he next sent Man Chong to help Cao

Ren at Fancheng as Adviser in the matter of attack. He also sent dispatches to the South Land to ask for the assistance of Sun Quan's marine force.

Having laid on Wei Yan the task of holding the East River Land, the Prince of Hanzhong, with his officers, returned to Chengdu and began to set his new house in order. A Palace was begun, and public guesthouses were built, and between Chengdu and Baishui, at selected places, they built four hundred resthouses and post stations. The Prince of Hanzhong also set himself to accumulate great stores of grain and forage and to till his arsenals with weapons with the design of mastering the capital in the north and the whole empire.

Then, his spies told him of the treaty between Cao Cao and Sun Quan, with designs upon Jingzhou, and he hastily called in Zhuge Liang to ask what should be done.

"I felt that Cao Cao would try to do this," said Zhuge Liang, "and most of the advisers in the South Land will persuade Cao Cao to order Cao Ren to begin the campaign."

"But what am I to do?" asked the Prince.

"First send a special messenger to Guan Yu with his new title, telling him to capture Fancheng, which will so dampen the ardor of the enemy that they will break off themselves."

Therefore, Liu Bei sent Fei Shi, a minister from his Board of War, to take the patent of the new title to Guan Yu, who received the delegate with great deference and conducted him into the city. After they had arrived at the official residence, Guan Yu inquired what new title had been conferred upon him.

“The first of the Five Tiger Generals,” replied Fei Shi.

“And who are the Five?”

“Their names are Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun, Ma Chao, and Huang Zhong.”

“The second is my Brother,” said Guan Yu, “Ma Chao comes of a famous family, and Zhao Yun has been with my elder Brother so long that he is as a brother. It is right for them to be put on a level with me. But what sort of a man is this Huang Zhong that he is ranked with us? The really great man does not stand shoulder-to-shoulder with any soldier that comes along.”

And Guan Yu refused both title and seal.

“You do wrong to refuse,” said Fei Shi. “Of old, Xiao He and Cao Shen helped Liu Bang, the Founder of the Han Dynasty, in his great enterprise and were very dear friends, while Han Xin was but a runaway leader from Chu. Yet Liu Bang made Han Xin a prince, and so placed him over the heads of the other two. I have never heard that these two resented it.

“The Prince of Hanzhong has his Five Tiger Generals, but he is still your Brother and all that that means. As his Brother, you are he and he is you. Is there any comparison with any other? The Prince has always treated you with the greatest kindness. You two are one in sorrow and joy, sharers of disaster and good fortune. No such question as that of a mere title ought to reckon at all. I pray you, Sir, reflect.”

Guan Yu understood, and thanked Fei Shi, saying, “You have prevented me from making a great mistake due to my ignorance.”

Guan Yu then received the seal with all humility.

Next, Fei Shi produced the edict ordering the capture of Fancheng. Guan Yu lost no time in obeying its command. He appointed Fu Shiren and Mi Fang as Leaders of the Van to take the first army out of the city into camp.

This done, a banquet was prepared for Fei Shi, and they sat late at their wine. While still at table, there was an alarm of fire in the new camp, and Guan Yu hastened out of the city to see. He found that the two generals had also been feasting, and the fire had started behind their tent, a spark having fallen into some explosives, whence it spread and destroyed the whole camp and all that was in it. Guan Yu and his soldiers did what they could to put out the fire and then reentered the city. There, Guan Yu summoned the two generals before him, abused them for their lack of care, and sentenced them to death.

However, Fei Shi interceded for them, saying, "It is not well to put two leaders to death at the beginning of a campaign, before even the army has marched. You might reprieve them at least."

Guan Yu's anger had by no means subsided, but he recalled the two generals and said, "Were it not that I have the greatest regard for Chairman Fei Shi here, I had let the sentence take its course. Now I will only flog you."

So the two officers received forty blows each and were degraded from leading the van. Their seals were taken away, and Mi Fang was sent to Nanjun, Fu Shiren to Gong'an.

"Now be warned," said Guan Yu. "If, when I return from my victories, there is the least sign of disorder on your part, you will suffer for both faults."

The two men flushed crimson and went out.

Then two new officers were appointed, Liao Hua and Guan Ping. Next, Guan Yu took command of the main army, and he had two advisers, Ma Liang and Yi Ji. Then it was that Hu Hua's son, Hu Ban, came to Jingzhou and joined Guan Yu, who loved him for the sake of his father and the good service Hu Ban had rendered when he had saved Guan Yu. Guan Yu sent Hu Ban to the Prince of Hanzhong in the train of Fei Shi.

The day that Guan Yu sacrificed to his standard before starting, he was lying in his tent, resting, when suddenly there dashed into his tent a huge boar, very large, as big as a bullock, and quite black. It bit his foot. He jumped up to kill the creature, when it squealed with the sound of tearing cloth—and he awoke. It was a dream, but he had a pain in his foot. The dream perplexed him, and he could not explain it.

He related it to his son, who interpreted it happily, saying, "The boar is a royal beast, like the dragon, and coming to your feet means a rise of your dignity."

When the dream got noised abroad, for he told his officers, some interpreted it as auspicious and some the reverse.

"When a person nears sixty, he ought not to be greatly disturbed by the thought of death," said Guan Yu. "After all, I am a warrior."

Just about that time came an edict from the Prince of Hanzhong making him Commanding General, with honorable insignia of rank and control over the nine territories of forty-one counties in Jingzhou.

When the officers congratulated him on his new honors, they did not forget the dream. "This shows what a dream of boars means."

This new distinction pleased Guan Yu greatly, and he had no more perplexing doubts. Soon, he marched away along the great road to the point of danger.

Cao Ren was in Xiangyang when he heard that Guan Yu was coming against him. He was much put about and inclined to trust solely to defense. But his next-in-command, Zhai Yuan, did not support this course and argued against it.

“The Prince of Wei has ordered you to act in concert with Wu and take Jingzhou. For the other side to come against such a combination is to walk in the way of death. Certainly we have no occasion to avoid a conflict.”

On the other hand, the newly-sent Adviser Man Chong inculcated caution. Said he, “Guan Yu is brave and cunning and one not to be met lightly. I think defense is best.”

Then General Xiahou Cun said contemptuously, “This is all the talk of a lot of book-folks. When the flood approaches, bank up to keep it out. Let the enemy come with their tired soldiers, and we shall go out, defeat them, and receive our reward, for we are sure of victory.”

Cao Ren was won over to the side of those of action. He placed Man Chong in command of the defenses of Fancheng, while he went outside to beat off Guan Yu.

When the two forces met, Guan Yu called to his side Guan Ping and Liao Hua, to whom he gave certain orders. These two advanced, settled their array, and Liao Hua then rode out and offered a challenge. Zhai Yuan accepted it. But soon after the combat began, Liao Hua made as if he was

defeated and turned to leave the field. Zhai Yuan went after him. The Jingzhou troops retired seven miles or so.

Soon, the Jingzhou soldiers came again and offered battle, and Xiahou Cun and Zhai Yuan both went out. The maneuver of the preceding day was repeated, and the Jingzhou army retreated another seven miles. But suddenly there was a detonation behind the army of Cao Cao, and the rolling of drums as for attack. Cao Ren hastily called upon his troops to return. They did so, but Guan Ping and Liao Hua then turned and followed on their heels so that the troops of Cao Cao were thrown into confusion.

Cao Ren by this time had seen that a trap had been laid and he had fallen therein, so he hastily marched with one army to Xiangyang. He got to within a short distance of the city when he saw before him a handsome banner waving in the wind, and out came Guan Yu with his Green-Dragon Saber ready to slay. Cao Ren was powerless from fear, and, fighting being impossible, he turned off into a byroad for Xiangyang.

Then Xiahou Cun came. He fell into a rage at the sight of the old warrior and went to fight him. But Xiahou Cun was slain in the first encounter. Zhai Yuan fled, but Guan Ping pursued and slew him. Then the pursuit was continued, and the loss of Cao Cao's side was very heavy. More than half were drowned in the River Xiang. Seeing the situation was desperate, Cao Ren fled to Fancheng. Guan Yu got possession of Xiangyang.

"You have obtained this city very easily," said the Marching General, Wang Fu, "but the task is not ended. Cao Cao's army has been beaten and its courage broken, but there is danger from the side of Wu. Lu Meng is at Lukou, and he has long cherished the desire to lay hands on Jingzhou. Suppose he now attacks: what will happen?"

“I was even thinking of that myself. You may go and attend to this matter. You will certainly be able to find certain elevated spots on the riverbank, about seven miles apart, suitable for alarm beacons whence could be signaled any attempt of the marines of Wu to cross the river. Fifty soldiers could guard each station. Let there be a flame by night and a smoke by day. If they cross the river, I must go and smite them.”

Wang Fu replied, “Fu Shiren and Mi Fang are defending important places, but they may not be able to defend the Passes well. There ought to be a commander-in-chief over Jingzhou City.”

“There is no need for anxiety. Army Inspector Pan Jun is guarding the city.”

“The objection is the character of Pan Jun. He is jealous and selfish and not a fit person for the task. I think you would do well to replace him by Zhao Lei, now the Chief of the Commissariat. Zhao Lei is loyal, trustworthy, clean-handed, and straight, a much more desirable man for the post.”

“I know Pan Jun very well, but I have delegated him for that duty and cannot change now. The work Zhao Lei has to do in the supplies is also most important. I do not think you need be anxious. Just get along with those beacons for me.”

Wang Fu, disappointed, took his leave.

Then Guan Ping was bidden to prepare ships ready to cross the river and attack Fancheng, whither Cao Ren had retired after his defeat.

Now Cao Ren said to Man Chong, “Neglecting your advice, I lost soldiers, two generals, and the city of Xiangyang. What am I to do now?”

“Guan Yu is very dangerous, too brave and skillful for us to try to defeat. We had better remain on the defensive,” replied Man Chong.

Just about this time came the tidings that Guan Yu was crossing the river on the way to attack. Man Chong maintained his policy of defense. But one of Cao Ren’s generals, Lu Chang, was for going out to meet the enemy.

“I ask for a few thousand troops,” said Lu Chang, “and I will meet the enemy on the way.”

“You cannot do any good,” said Man Chong.

“According to the advice of you and the other bookish officials, there is only one thing to do. But will defense drive off the enemy? The proper way is to attack your enemy while he is crossing a river, and as Guan Yu is doing that now, why not attack? It will be quite another matter if you let him reach the walls and get possession of the moat.”

As a result of his arguments and protest, Lu Chang got command of two thousand troops, whom he led to the river. And there he found Guan Yu already arrayed for battle. Guan Yu at once rode out, and the bold Lu Chang was going to attack him. But his soldiers were panic-stricken at the sight of Guan Yu’s fierce countenance and ran away. Lu Chang called them to come back, but they would not stop, and as Guan Yu came on with a rush, the army of Wei again lost the day. Many were slain, and the remainder ran into Fancheng. Cao Ren sent off a hasty messenger for help and a letter to Xuchang to tell what Guan Yu had done and how Fancheng was in imminent danger of falling.

The letter reached Cao Cao, who chose a certain general among his leaders and assigned the task, “You go and defend Fancheng!”

The man at once stepped out and accepted the assignment. He was Yu Jin.

“Let me have another general to lead the van,” said Yu Jin.

“Who volunteers?” asked Cao Cao, looking around.

“I do!” cried a man. “I will give my poor services for what they are worth. And I will capture this fellow Guan Yu and bring him as an offering before your standard.”

The soldiers of Wei began the war
Even before Wu had sent out armies.

But who was the man bold enough to say he would capture Guan Yu? For his name, see the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVIII

CHAPTER 74

PANG DE TAKES HIS COFFIN TO THE FIELD; GUAN YU USES WATER TO
DROWN THE SEVEN ARMIES.

The bold and self-confident leader of Cao Cao's army who promised to make an end of Guan Yu was Pang De. Cao Cao was glad to find such a man.

"That fellow Guan Yu has a great reputation, and in the whole empire he has no rival. He has not met his match yet, but now that you are going, he will find all his work cut out."

So spoke Cao Cao. He conferred on Yu Jin the title of General Who Corrects the South and on Pang De that of General Who Corrects the West, and he made Pang De Leader of the Van. The two generals marched out with their seven armies to Fancheng.

These seven armies were composed of sturdy fellows from the north, led by two of their own Marching Commanders named Dong Heng and Dong Chao. Hearing who was to command them, these two, supported by their generals, went to see Yu Jin and represented that the Leader of the Van was unsuitable.

Dong Heng said, "Sir General, the expedition you lead is for the relief of Fancheng, and it can confidently expect victory. But is it wise to place such as Pang De in command of the van?"

"Why?" said Yu Jin, surprised.

"Because Pang De was once under the command of Ma Chao. He had no alternative but to surrender and fight for Wei. But his former chief is

now in high honor in Shu, one of the Five Tiger Generals, and his own brother Pang Rou is there, too, as an officer. To send Pang De as Leader of the Van just now seems like trying to extinguish a fire with oil. Would it not be well to inform the Prince of Wei and ask him to exchange this man for another?"

Without further argument or delay, Yu Jin went to see the Prince and laid before him the objections to Pang De's appointment. As soon as Cao Cao understood, he summoned Pang De to the steps and bade him yield his seal as Leader of the Van.

"O Prince, why do you reject my services? I was just about to do my best for you."

"I do not doubt you, but Ma Chao is now in the west, and your brother also—both in the service of Liu Bei. I myself have no doubts, but it is what all the crowd are saying. What can I do?"

Pang De took off his headdress and prostrated himself, bitter tears rolling down his cheeks.

"Since I surrendered to you, O Prince, I have experienced much kindness, such that I would undergo any sufferings to show my gratitude. I hope you will trust me. When my brother and I were at home together, his wife was a wicked woman, and I slew her while I was drunk. My brother has never forgiven me, but is permeated with hate for me. He swears never to see me again, and we are enemies. For my old master, Ma Chao, I have profound contempt. He is bold, but only that, and was in a pitiable and dejected state when he found his way to the west. Now, like me, he serves his own master, but our friendship is at an end. How could I think of another after your kindness to me?"

Cao Cao raised Pang De from the ground and soothed him, saying, "I have always known what a noble man you are, and what I said just now was

to satisfy the feelings of other people. Now you can strive to win fame. If you do not turn your back on me, I shall not on you.”

Then Pang De took his leave and returned to his house, where he ordered the artificers to make him a coffin. Next, he invited all his friends to a banquet, and the coffin was set out in the reception room for all to see.

And they asked one another, “What can that inauspicious thing mean, putting out on the eve of a campaign?”

By and by, drinking to them, Pang De said, “The Prince of Wei has been generous to me, and I am pledged to show my gratitude to the death. I am about to go out against this Guan Yu, and I have to kill him or he must kill me. If he does not kill me, I must commit suicide, and so I have prepared what is necessary. I will not return leaving my task unachieved.”

The terrible omen saddened the guests, and they fell to sighing. Then Pang De called in his wife, Lady Li, and bade her bring their son Pang Hui, whom he commended to her care.

“I have been appointed Leader of the Van of this new expedition against Guan Yu, and my duty bids me seek death or glory on the battlefield. If I die, our son is in your especial care. Alas, the child has been born ill-starred, and when he grows up, he will have to avenge a father.”

Both mother and son wept as they bade him farewell.

When the army marched, the coffin was carried in its train. Pang De bade his officers, saying, “I will fight to the end with Guan Yu. Place my body therein if I fall in combat. And if I slay him, then will I bring his head in this coffin as an offering to our Prince.”

Then out spoke his five hundred veterans and said, “If you are like this, O General, then we also will follow you to the end.”

The vanguard then marched away.

A certain man told the story of these happenings to Cao Cao, who was very pleased, saying, "I have no anxiety with such a general to lead my armies."

But Jia Xu said, "I am anxious for Pang De's safety. He is overbold and imprudent to fight with Guan Yu to the death."

Cao Cao thought such an act would be unwise, and he hastily sent a messenger with an edict warning Pang De against his antagonist.

"This Guan Yu lacks neither cunning nor valor. You are to be most cautious in engaging him. If you can conquer, then conquer; if there be any doubt, remain on the defensive."

"How highly does our Prince regard this fellow Guan Yu!" said Pang De to his officers when he heard this new command. "But I think I shall be able to take the keen edge off his thirty-year reputation."

"The command of the Prince is to be obeyed," said Yu Jin.

Pang De hastened to Fancheng in all the pomp and panoply of war, his gongs clanging, his drums rolling as he marched.

Guan Yu was sitting in his tent when his spies came to report: "Seven armies of the north under Yu Jin are approaching. They are ten miles away. The Van Leader is Pang De, who brings with him a coffin. As he marches, he slanders you, General, and vows to fight a decisive battle with you."

Rage took possession of Guan Yu. His face changed color, his beard shook, and he roared out, "There is never a fighting man in all the world

who has heard my name without trembling. Does this fellow dare disdain me?"

Then he ordered Guan Ping to attack Fancheng while he went out to slay the impudent boaster who dared him.

"Father," said Guan Ping, "Taishan Mountain in its majesty does not quarrel with a pebble. Let me go and fight this Pang De."

"Well, my son, go and try. I will support you."

So Guan Ping took his sword, mounted his steed, and went out with his troops. Both sides were drawn up for battle. On the side of Wei, there flew a single black flag on which was inscribed Pang De, Corrector of the West in white. The leader himself wore a blue robe with a silver helmet and rode a white charger. He stood out in front, backed by his five hundred veterans, and a few footsoldiers were there, too, bearing the gruesome coffin.

Guan Ping was very angry, crying out, "Turncoat! Traitor!"

"Who is that?" asked Pang De of his followers.

A certain one replied, "That is Guan Yu's adopted son, Guan Ping."

Pang De cried, "I have an edict from the Prince of Wei to take your father's head. You are but a weakling, and I will spare you. But call your father!"

Guan Ping dashed forward, flourishing his sword. Pang De went to meet him, and there followed thirty-odd bouts with no advantage to either.

Both sides then drew off to rest. Soon the news of this combat reached Guan Yu, and he was not pleased. He sent Liao Hua to assault the city while he went to do battle with Pang De. Guan Ping met his father and related the story of the indecisive fight.

So Guan Yu rode out with his Green-Dragon Saber ready, and he shouted to Pang De, "Come quickly and be slain!"

The drums reechoed as Pang De rode out and replied, "The edict from the Prince of Wei tells me to take your head. In case you disbelieve it, here is the coffin ready to receive it. If you fear death, dismount from your horse and surrender!"

"I hold you for a simple fool!" cried Guan Yu. "What can you do? It is a pity to stain my blade with the blood of such a rat."

Then he galloped Red Hare out toward Pang De, flourishing the saber. Pang De whirled his blade and came to meet him, and they two fought a hundred bouts. And as they fought, the lust of battle seemed to grow, and both armies were lost in amazement.

But the army of Wei began to fear for their champion, and the gongs sounded the retirement. At the same time Guan Ping began to think of his father's fatigue, and his gongs clanged, too. So both armies drew off at the same time.

"People rumor Guan Yu is a mighty man of war. Today, I really believe that," said Pang De, when he had gotten back among his own line.

Then his chief, Yu Jin, came to see him and said, "O General, you fought the great combat of a hundred bouts, which ended indecisively. I think it would be prudent to retire out of his way and therefore blunt his spirit."

But Pang De replied haughtily, "What makes you so soft? Yet the Prince gave you the command of the seven armies! But tomorrow I will fight again, and that to the death. I swear I will never give way."

Yu Jin could not overcome Pang De's decision, so he went back to his own camp.

When Guan Yu had got back to his camp, he extolled Pang De, saying, "His swordsmanship is perfect. He is my worthy enemy."

“The newborn calf fears not the tiger,” said Guan Ping. “But if you slay this fellow, my father, you have only killed a common soldier of the Qiang tribes beyond the frontier. If any accident occurs, then you will have the reproach of not having considered your Brother’s charge.”

“How can my resentment be assuaged, save by the death of this man?” returned Guan Yu. “I have decided to fight, so say no more.”

Next day, Guan Yu took the field first, and Pang De quickly came out. Both arrayed their troops and then went to the front at the same moment. This time, neither spoke, but the combat began forthwith. It went on for fifty bouts, and then Pang De pulled his horse, sheathed his sword, and fled. Guan Yu went in pursuit, and Guan Ping followed lest there should be need of him.

Guan Yu roared out reviling to his fleeing foe, “Traitor! You want to use the ‘swinging-horse stab,’ but here I am, never afraid of that.”

But the fact was that Pang De had only pretended to try for a foul stroke in order to cover a resort to his bow. He pulled in his horse, fitted an arrow to the string, and was just on the point of shooting when Guan Ping, who was sharp-eyed, shouted out a warning.

“The bandit is going to shoot!”

Guan Yu saw it, but the bowstring twanged and the arrow came flying. He was not nimble enough to avoid it, and it wounded his left arm. Guan Ping at once went to his father’s assistance and led him away to the camp. Pang De wished to follow up this advantage and came back whirling his sword, but, ere he could strike, the gongs of his own side rang out. He thought there was something amiss in the rear and stopped.

The signal for retreat had been sounded by Yu Jin out of jealousy, for he had seen that Guan Yu had been wounded, and he begrudged his

colleague the glory which would eclipse his own. Pang De obeyed, but when he got back, he wanted to know why retreat had been sounded on the very verge of a great success.

“Why did the gongs clang?” asked Pang De.

“Because of our Prince’s warning. Though Guan Yu was wounded, I feared some trick on his part. He is very cunning.”

“I would have killed him if you had not done that,” said Pang De.

“Haste makes slow going. You can postpone your fight with him,” said Yu Jin.

Pang De, though ignorant of the real reason why he was made to miss success at the critical moment, was still very vexed.

Guan Yu went back to camp, and the arrowhead was pulled out of the wound. Happily, it had not penetrated very deeply, and the usual remedies against injuries by metal were applied.

Guan Yu was very bitter against his enemy and declared, “I swear I will have my revenge for this arrow.”

“Never mind anything but recovering now,” said his officers. “Rest and get well, then you may fight again.”

Before long, Pang De renewed his challenge, and Guan Yu was for going out to fight; however, he yielded to the entreaties of his officers. And when Pang De set his soldiers to reviling the warrior, Guan Ping saw to it that his father never heard it. After ten days of challenges hurled uselessly at an army that ignored them, Pang De took counsel with Yu Jin.

“Evidently, Guan Yu is helpless from the effects of that arrow wound. We ought to advance all our seven armies against him while he is ill and destroy his camp. Thereby, we shall relieve Fancheng.”

Thus spoke Pang De, but jealousy of the glory that might accrue to his next-in-command again made Yu Jin urge caution and obedience to the command of the Prince of Wei. Yu Jin refused to move his army in spite of Pang De's repeated persuasion. Still more, Yu Jin led the armies to a new camping ground behind the hills some three miles north of Fancheng. There, his own army prevented communication by the main road, while he sent Pang De into a valley in the rear so that Pang De could do nothing.

To Guan Ping's great joy, Guan Yu's wound soon healed. Soon after, they heard of Yu Jin's new camp, and as Guan Ping could assign no reason for the change and suspected some ruse, he told his father, who went up to a high place to reconnoiter.

Looking round, Guan Yu noted that there seemed much slackness about everything—from flags to soldiers—in Fancheng, that the relief armies were camped in a valley to the north, and that the River Xiang seemed to run very swiftly. After impressing the topography on his mind, he called the guides and asked the name of the gully about three miles north of the city.

“Zengkou Stream,” was the reply.

He chuckled. “I shall capture Yu Jin,” said he.

Those with him asked how he knew that.

He replied, “Why, how can any fish last long in such a trap?”

Those in his train gave but little weight to what he said, and presently, he went back to his own tent. It was just then the time for the autumn rains, and a heavy downpour came on, lasting several days. Orders were given to

get ready boats and rafts and such things. Guan Ping could not think what such preparations meant in a dry land campaign. So he asked his father.

“Do you not know, even?” replied his father. “Our enemies have encamped on difficult ground instead of the open country and are crowded in the dangerous valley there. After some days of this rain, River Xiang will swell, and I shall send people to dam up all the outlets and so let the water rise very high. When at its highest, I shall open the dams and let the water out over Fancheng. That valley will be flooded too, and all the soldiers will become aquatic animals.”

The Wei armies had camped in the gully, and after several days of heavy rain, Army Inspector Cheng He ventured to speak to his commander.

He said, “The army is camped near the mouth of a stream in a depression. There are hills around us, but they are too far off to keep the water away. Our soldiers are already suffering from these heavy rains, and, moreover, they say the Jingzhou troops have moved to higher ground. More than that, at River Han they are preparing boats and rafts so that they can take advantage of the floods if there are any. Our army will be in great danger, and something should be done.”

But Yu Jin scoffed at his words, saying, “You fool! Do you want to injure the spirit of our soldiers? Talk no more, or your head will be fallen.”

Cheng He went away greatly ashamed.

Then Cheng He went to Pang De, who saw the force of his words and said, “What you said is excellent. If Yu Jin will not move camp tomorrow, I myself will do so.”

So Cheng He left it at that.

That night there came a great storm. As Pang De sat in his tent, he heard the sound as of ten thousand horses in stampede and a roar as of the drums of war seeming to shake the earth. He was alarmed, left his tent, and mounted his charger to go and see what it meant. Then he saw the rolling waters coming in from every side and the seven armies flying from the flood, which speedily rose to the height of ten spans. Yu Jin, Pang De, and several other officers sought safety by rushing up the hills.

As day dawned, Guan Yu and his marines came along in large boats with flags flying and drums beating. Yu Jin saw no way of escape, and his following was reduced to about fifty or sixty soldiers. They all said they surrendered. Guan Yu made them strip and then took them on board.

After that he went to capture Pang De, who was standing on a hillock with Dong Heng, Dong Chao, Cheng He, and his five hundred troops, all without armors. Pang De saw his archenemy approach without a sign of fear and even went boldly to meet him. Guan Yu surrounded the party with his boats, and the archers began to shoot. When more than half the troops had been struck down, the survivors became desperate.

Dong Heng and Dong Chao pressed their chief to give in, saying, "We have lost more than half of our men. Surrender is the only course!"

But Pang De only raged, saying, "I have received great kindness from the Prince. Think you that I will bow the head to any other?"

Pang De cut down Dong Heng and Dong Chao right in the battlefield and then shouted, "Anyone who says surrender shall be as these two!"

So the survivors made a desperate effort to beat off their enemies, and they held their own up to midday. Then Guan Yu's marines redoubled their efforts, and the arrows and stones rained down upon the defenders, who fought desperately hand to hand with their assailants.

“The valorous leader fears death less than desertion; the brave warrior does not break faith to save his life!” cried Pang De. “This is the day of my death, but I will fight on to the last. And you, General, should fight to your end, too.”

So Cheng He pressed on till he fell into the water by an arrow of Guan Yu, and then the soldiers yielded.

Pang De fought on. Then, one of the boats happened to close in on the bank. With a tremendous leap, Pang De lighted on it and slashed at the marines, killing ten of them. The others jumped overboard and swam away. Then Pang De, one hand still holding his sword, tried to maneuver the boat across the river to Fancheng. But there came drifting down a raft, which collided with and upset his boat so that he was sent struggling in the water. Next, a general on the raft jumped into the water, gripped him, and put him on the boat again.

The captor was Zhou Cang, a skillful waterman who, having lived in Jingzhou for many years, was thoroughly expert in boat navigation. Beside, he was very powerful and so was able to make Pang De a prisoner.

In this flood perished the whole of the seven armies, except the few that saved themselves by swimming. These latter, having no way of escape, surrendered to the victors.



In the depth of night rolled the war drums,
Summoning the warriors as to battle.
But the enemy was no man,
For the waters had risen and the flood came.
This was the plan of Guan Yu, the crafty,

To drown his enemies. More than human
was he in cunning. The ages hand on his fame
As his glory was told in his own day.



Guan Yu then returned to the higher ground, where his tent was pitched, and therein took his seat to receive his prisoners. The lictors brought up Yu Jin, who prostrated himself humbly.

“How dared you think to oppose me? To execute you would be like killing a hog. It would be soiling weapons for nothing,” said Guan Yu, stroking his beard.

Yu Jin was bound and sent to the prison in Jingzhou.

“I will decide your fate when I return,” said Guan Yu.

The general having thus dealt with the chief, Pang De was sent for. He came, pride and anger flashing from his eyes. He did not kneel but stood boldly erect.

“You have a brother in Hanzhong, and your old chief was Ma Chao, also in high honor in Shu. Would you not better join them?”

“Rather than surrender to you, I would perish beneath the sword,” cried Pang De.

He reviled his captors without ceasing till, losing patience at last, Guan Yu sent him to his death. Pang De was beheaded. He stretched out his neck for the headsman’s sword. Out of pity, he was honorably buried.

The floods were still out, and taking advantage of them, the troops of Jingzhou boarded the boats to move toward Fancheng, which now stood out as a mere island with waves breaking against the walls.

The force of the waters being great, the city wall was beginning to give way, and the whole population, male and female, aged and young, were carrying mud and bricks to strengthen it. Their efforts seemed vain, and the leaders of Cao Cao's army were very desperate.

Some of the generals went to see Cao Ren, who said, "No ordinary person's strength can fend off today's danger. If we can hold out till nightfall, we may escape by boat. We shall lose the city, but we shall save our skins."

But Man Chong interposed before the boats could be got ready.

He said, "No! No! Though the force of these mountainous waters is great, we only have to wait ten days or so, and the flood will have passed. Though Guan Yu has not assaulted this city, he has sent another army to Jiaxia, which indicates he dares not advance lest we should fall upon his rear. Remember, too, that to retire from this city means the abandonment of everything south of the Yellow River. Therefore, I advise that you defend this place."

Cao Ren saluted Man Chong as he concluded his harangue, saying, "What a tremendous error I should have committed had it not been for you, Sir!"

Then, riding his white charger, he went up on the city walls, gathered his officers around him, and pledged himself not to surrender.

"The Prince's command being to defend this city, I shall defend it to the last. And I shall put to death anyone who even mentions abandonment," said he.

“And we desire to defend it to our last gasp,” chimed in his officers.

Then they saw to it that the means of offense were good. Many hundreds of archers and crossbowmen were stationed on the wall and kept watch night and day. The old and the young of ordinary people were made to carry earth and stones to strengthen the wall.

After some ten days, the flood was at an end. Then the news of Guan Yu’s success against the Wei campaign got abroad, and the terror of his name spread wider and wider. About the same time, too, his second son, Guan Xing, came to visit his father in camp. Guan Yu thought this a good opportunity to send his report of success to Capital Chengdu and entrusted to Guan Xing a dispatch mentioning each officer’s services and requesting promotion for them. Guan Xing accordingly took leave of his father and left.

After Guan Xing’s departure, the army was divided into two halves, one under Guan Yu to attack Fancheng, and the other to go to Jiaxia.

One day, Guan Yu rode over to the north gate. Halting his steed, he pointed with his whip toward the defenders on the wall, and called out, “You lot of rats will not give in then! What are you waiting for?”

Cao Ren, who was among his soldiers on the wall, saw that Guan Yu had no armor on, so he ordered his men to shoot. The archers and bowmen at once sent a great flight of arrows and bolts that way. Guan Yu hastily pulled the reins to retire, but an arrow struck him in the arm. The shock of the blow made him turn in the saddle, and he fell from his horse.

Just now a mighty army perished
By the river's overflow;
A crossbow bolt from the city wall
Lays a valiant warrior low.

What further befell Guan Yu will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVIII

CHAPTER 75

GUAN YU HAS A SCRAPED-BONE SURGERY; LU MENG CROSSES THE RIVER IN WHITE ROBE.

At the sight of Guan Yu falling from his charger, Cao Ren led his army out of the city to follow up with an attack, but Guan Ping drove him off and escorted his father back to camp. There, the arrow was extracted, but the arrowhead had been poisoned. The wound was deep, and the poison had penetrated to the bone. The right arm was discolored and swollen and useless.

Guan Ping consulted with the other leaders and proposed, "As fighting is impossible for the moment, we should withdraw to Jingzhou, where my father's wound can be treated."

Having decided upon this, they went to see the wounded warrior.

"What have you come for?" asked Guan Yu when they entered.

"Considering that you, Sir, have been wounded in the right arm, we fear the result of the excitement of battle. Moreover, you can hardly take part in a fight just now, and we therefore propose that the army retire till you are recovered."

Guan Yu replied angrily, "I am on the point of taking the city, and if I succeed, I must press forward to Capital Xuchang and destroy that brigand Cao Cao so that the Hans may be restored to their own. Think you that I can vitiate the whole campaign because of a slight wound? Would you dishearten the army?"

Guan Ping and his colleagues said no more, but somewhat unwillingly withdrew.

Seeing that their leader would not retire and the wound showed no signs of healing, the various generals inquired far and near for a good surgeon to attend their general.

One day, a person arrived in a small ship and, having landed and come up to the gate of the camp, was led in to see Guan Ping. The visitor wore a square-cut cap and a loose robe. In his hand he carried a small, black bag.

He said, "My name is Hua Tuo, and I belong to Qiao. I have heard of the wound sustained by the famous general and have come to heal it."

"Surely you must be the physician who treated Zhou Tai in the South Land," said Guan Ping.

"I am."

Taking with him the other generals, Guan Ping went in to see his father. Guan Yu was engaging in a game of chess with Ma Liang, although his arm was very painful. But Guan Yu kept up appearances so as not to discourage the troops. When they told him that a physician had come, he consented to see him.

Hua Tuo was introduced, asked to take a seat and, after the tea of ceremony, was shown the injured arm.

"This was caused by an arrow," said the doctor. "There is poison in the wound, and it has penetrated to the bone. Unless the wound is soon treated, the arm will become useless."

"What do you propose to do?" asked Guan Yu.

"I know how to cure the wound, but I think you will be afraid of the remedy."

“Am I likely to be afraid of that when I am not even afraid of death? Death is only a return home, after all.”

Then Hua Tuo said, “This is what I shall do. In a private room, I shall erect a post with a steel ring attached. I shall ask you, Sir, to insert your arm in the ring, and I shall bind it firmly to the post. Then, I shall cover your head with a quilt so that you cannot see, and with a scalpel, I shall open up the flesh right down to the bone. Then I shall scrape away the poison. This done, I shall dress the wound with a certain preparation, sew it up with a thread, and there will be no further trouble. But I think you may quail at the severity of the treatment.”

Guan Yu smiled. “It all sounds easy enough,” said he. “But why the post and the ring?”

Refreshments were then served, and after a few cups of wine, the warrior extended his arm for the operation. With his other hand, he went on with his game of chess. Meanwhile, the surgeon prepared his knife and called a lad to hold a basin beneath the limb.

“I am just going to cut. Do not start,” said Hua Tuo.

“When I consented to undergo the treatment, did you think I was afraid of pain?”

The surgeon then performed the operation as he had previously described. He found the bone much discolored, but he scraped it clean. When the knife went over the surface of the bone and made horrible sounds, all those near covered their eyes and turned pale. But Guan Yu went on with his game, only drinking a cup of wine now and again, and his face betrayed no sign of pain.

When the wound had been cleansed, sewn up, and dressed, the patient stood up, smiling, and said, “This arm is now as good as it ever was. There

is no pain. Indeed, Master, you are a marvel.”

“I have spent my life in the art,” said Hua Tuo, “but I have never seen such a patient as you, Sir. You are as if not from the earth but Heaven.”



Here as surgeons, there physicians, all boast their skill;
Bitter few are those that cure one when one's really ill.
As for superhuman valor, rivals Guan Yu had none,
So for holy touch in healing, Hua Tuo stood the one.



When the cure was well-advanced, Guan Yu gave a fine banquet in honor of Hua Tuo and offered him a fee of a hundred ounces of gold.

But Hua Tuo declined it, saying, “I had come to treat you, O General, from admiration of your great virtue and not for money. Although your wound is cured, you must be careful of your health, and especially avoid all excitement for a hundred days, when you will be as well as ever you were.”

Then Hua Tuo, having prepared dressings for the wound, took his leave, refusing fees to the very last.



Having captured Yu Jin and accomplished the death of Pang De, Guan Yu became more famous and more fear-inspiring throughout the empire than even before.

Cao Cao called together his advisers to help him decide upon what he should do. Said Cao Cao, “I must acknowledge this Guan Yu as the one

man who, in skill and valor, overtops the whole world. Lately, he has obtained possession of Jingzhou and the territory near it, and has so become very terrible. He is a tiger with wings added. Pang De is no more; Yu Jin is his prisoner; the armies of Wei have lost their morale; and if he led his armies to Xuchang, we would be helpless. I can only think of avoiding the peril by removal of the capital. What think you?"

"No, do not take that step," said Sima Yi, rising to reply. "Yu Jin and all the others you lost were victims of the flood and slain in battle. These losses do no harm at all to your great plan. The Suns and Lius are no longer friends since Guan Yu has accomplished his desire. You may send a messenger into Wu to foment the quarrel and cause Sun Quan to send his armies to attack the army of Guan Yu from the rear, promising that, when things are tranquil, you will reward the south to Sun Quan. In this way, you will relieve Fancheng."

Here Minister Jiang Ji said, "Sima Yi speaks well, and the messenger should lose no time. Do not move the capital and disturb the people."

Cao Cao therefore did not carry out his first proposal.

But he was sad at the loss of Yu Jin, and spoke of him affectionately, "Yu Jin had followed me faithfully for thirty years, yet in that moment of truth he was less than Pang De."

It was necessary to send someone with the letters to Wu and also to find another leader willing to face Guan Yu. Cao Cao had not long to wait for the latter, as an officer stepped out from the ranks of those in waiting and offered himself. It was Xu Huang.

Xu Huang's offer was accepted, and he was given fifty thousand of veterans. Lu Qian was sent as his second, and the army marched to Yangling Slope, where they halted to see if any support was coming from the southeast.

Sun Quan fell in with the scheme of Cao Cao as soon as he had read Cao Cao's letter. He at once prepared a reply for the messenger to take back, and then gathered his officers, civil and military, to consult. Zhang Zhao was the first speaker.

"We know Guan Yu has captured one leader and slain another. This has added greatly to his fame and reputation. Cao Cao was going to move the capital rather than risk an attack. We also know that Fancheng is in imminent danger. Cao Cao has asked for our help, but when he has gained his end, I doubt whether he will hold to his promise."

Before Sun Quan had replied, they announced the arrival of Lu Meng, who had come in a small ship from Lukou with a special message. He was at once called in and asked what it was.

Said Lu Meng, "The armies of Guan Yu being absent at Fancheng, the opportunity should be taken to attack Jingzhou."

"But I wish to attack Xuzhou in the north. What of this plan?" said Sun Quan.

"It would be better to attack Jingzhou and so get control of the Great River. Cao Cao is far away to the north and too occupied to regard the east. Xuzhou is weakly held and could be taken easily, but the lie of the land favors the use of an army rather than a navy force. If you capture it, it will not be easy to hold. But once you hold Jingzhou, you can evolve other schemes."

"Really, my desire was to attack Jingzhou, but I wished to hear what you would say to the other plan. Now, Sir, make me a plan speedily, and I will act upon it."

So Lu Meng took his leave and went back to Lukou. But soon they heard that Guan Yu had had beacon towers erected at short distances all along the Great River, and that the army of Jingzhou was being put into most efficient condition.

“If this is so, it is hard to make a plan that will ensure success,” said Lu Meng. “I have already advised my master to attack Jingzhou, but I am unable to meet this complication.”

Therefore, he made illness an excuse to stay at home and sent to inform Sun Quan, who was very distressed at the news.

Then said Lu Xun, “The illness is feigned. He is quite well.”

“If you know that so well, go and see,” said Sun Quan.

Away went Lu Xun and speedily arrived at Lukou, where he saw Lu Meng, who indeed appeared to be in perfect health. Nor did his face bear any signs of recent illness.

“The Marquis of Wu has sent me to inquire after your honorable complaint,” said Lu Xun.

“How distressed I am that the state of my wretched carcass has caused the Marquis the inconvenience of inquiring,” replied Lu Meng.

“The Marquis placed a very heavy responsibility on your shoulders, but you are not making the best use of the opportunity. However, what is the real origin of your distress?”

Lu Meng sat gazing at his visitor a long time without replying.

“I have a little remedy,” said Lu Xun. “Do you think you might use it?”

Lu Meng dismissed the servants, and when the two were alone, he said, “This remedy, my friend: please tell me what it is.”

“Your ailment is due simply to the efficiency of the Jingzhou soldiers. I know how to keep the beacons from flaring, and I can make the defenders of Jingzhou come to you with their hands tied. Would that cure you?”

“My friend, you speak as if you saw into my inmost heart. Pray unfold your good scheme.”

“Guan Yu thinks himself too much of a hero for anyone to dare to face him, and his only anxiety is yourself. Now you must take advantage of this excuse you have made of illness actually to resign this post, so that the pretense may be kept up and another person be appointed to your place. Let this person, your successor, humbly praise Guan Yu till that general becomes so conceited that he will withdraw all the troops from Jingzhou to send them against Fancheng. When Jingzhou is left undefended then is our chance, and the city will fall into our hands.”

“The plan seems most excellent,” said Lu Meng.

Wherefore, Lu Meng’s “malady” waxed worse, so that he was confined to bed. He gave Lu Xun his letter of resignation to carry back to Sun Quan. The messenger hastened back and explained the ruse to his master, who soon after issued a command for Lu Meng to retire and attend to the recovery of his health.

But Lu Meng came to Sun Quan to discuss the matter of a successor.

Sun Quan said to him, “As to the appointment at Lukou, you know Zhou Yu recommended Lu Su, who at his last moment proposed you. Now you ought to be able to mention some other talented and well-known officer to succeed you.”

“If you choose a well-known man, Guan Yu will certainly be on his guard against him. Now Lu Xun is deep and farseeing, but he has no widespread fame. Hence no particular notice would be taken of his

appointment and no countermeasures taken. So he is the most suitable person to send.”

Sun Quan agreed and thereupon promoted Lu Xun to the rank of General of the Right Army and Admiral of the Right Fleet, and sent him to defend the port.

“I am very young,” said Lu Xun, “and feel unequal to such a post.”

“Lu Meng has proposed you, and you will not make any mistakes. Pray do not decline,” said Sun Quan.

So the appointment was made, and Lu Xun set out at once. When he had assumed charge of the cavalry, the infantry, and the marines, he set about drawing up a letter to Guan Yu, and he selected fine horses and beautiful silks and good wines and delicacies suitable for gifts to go with the letter. He sent all by the hand of a trusty messenger to Fancheng.

The news of the change of command reached Guan Yu when he lay ill from the effects of his wound and unable to conduct any military operations. Close upon the news came the letter and the gifts from Lu Xun, and the bearer was called in to see the warrior.

“Friend Sun Quan was not very prudent when he made a Commanding General out of a mere youth,” said Guan Yu, pointing to the messenger.

The messenger said, “General Lu Xun sends this letter and some presents, which he hopes you will accept. He also sends his felicitations and would rejoice if the two houses could become friends.”

Guan Yu read the letter, which was couched in most modest language, and then threw back his head and laughed aloud. He bade the attendants receive the various gifts, and sent the bearer away.

The messenger forthwith returned to Lukou and reported to Lu Xun, “Guan Yu seemed very gratified, and he felt no anxiety and danger toward

the South Land.”

Spies were sent out to report on proceedings, and they returned to say that half the troops of Jingzhou had been sent to assist in the siege of Fancheng. That city was to be seriously assaulted as soon as Guan Yu had recovered.

This news was promptly sent on to Sun Quan, who at once called in Lu Meng to decide upon the next move.

“Now is the favorable moment to get possession of Jingzhou,” said Sun Quan. “I propose to send you and my brother, Sun Jiao, to lead the army.”

This Sun Jiao was really only a cousin, as he was the second son of Sun Quan’s uncle, Sun Jing.

But Lu Meng objected. “My lord, if you think to employ me, then employ me only; if Sun Jiao, then Sun Jiao only. You cannot have forgotten that Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu were associate commanders, and although the final decision lay with Zhou Yu, the other presumed upon his seniority and there was some unfriendliness between the two. All ended well because Cheng Pu recognized the ability of his colleague and so supported him. I know I am not so clever as Zhou Yu, but Sun Jiao’s consanguinity will be a greater obstacle than mere length of service, and I fear he may not be wholly with me.”

Sun Quan saw the force of the contention, and appointed Lu Meng to sole command with Sun Jiao to help him in the commissariat. Lu Meng thanked his lord for his commission, soon got his thirty thousand marines together, and assembled eighty ships for the expedition.

Lu Meng dressed a number of sailors in the plain, white costumes of ordinary merchants and put them on board to work his vessels. He concealed his veterans in the compartments. He selected seven generals—Han Dang, Jiang Qin, Zhu Ran, Pan Zhang, Zhou Tai, Xu Sheng, and Ding Feng—to serve under him, and settled the order of their successive movements. The remainder of the forces was left with Sun Quan as supports and reserves. Letters were also written to Cao Cao that he might cooperate by sending his army to attack Guan Yu in the rear, and to Lu Xun that he would act in concert.

Then, the sailors in plain, white dress navigated the ships to River Xunyang as quickly as possible, and then crossed to the north bank.

When the beacon-keepers came down to question them, the men of Wu said, “We are traders forced into the bank by contrary winds.”

And they offered gifts to the beacon-keepers, who accepted them and let the ships come to an anchor close to the shore.

At about the second watch, the soldiers came out of hiding in the holds of the transports, suddenly fell upon the beacon-keepers, and made them prisoners, officers and soldiers. Next, the signal for a general landing was given, and all the soldiers from the eighty ships went ashore. The guard stations were attacked and all the troops captured and carried off to the ships, not one being allowed to escape. Then the force of Wu hurried off to the city of Jingzhou, having so far carried out their plans so that no one knew of their coming.

Nearing Jingzhou, Lu Meng spoke kindly to his captives and gave them gifts and comforted them in order to induce them to get the gates opened for him to enter the city. He won them over to his side, and they promised to aid him. They would show a flare as a signal that the gates were free. So they went in advance and arrived at the gates about midnight.

They called the watch. The wardens of the gate, recognizing their voices, opened for them. Once within, they shouted and lit the flares. Immediately, the soldiers of Wu came in with a rush and were soon in possession.

The first order issued by Lu Meng was to spare the people; instant death should be the punishment for any murder or robbery. The various officials in the city were retained in their offices and continued their functions. Special guards were set over Guan Yu's family dwelling, and none dared break open any other house. A messenger was sent with tidings to Sun Quan.

One very wet day, Lu Meng, with a few horsemen as escort, was going round the walls and visiting the gates. One of the soldiers took from a passerby a broad-brimmed hat and put it on over his helmet to keep his armor dry. Lu Meng saw it, and the offender was seized. He was a fellow-villager of Lu Meng, but that did not save him.

"You are an old acquaintance, but you knew my order. Why did you disobey it?"

"I thought the rain would spoil my uniform, and I took the hat to protect it. I did not take it for my own advantage, but to protect state property. Spare me, O General, for the sake of our common dwelling-place."

"I know you were protecting your armor, but still it was disobedience to the order against taking anything from the people."

The soldier was beheaded and his head exposed as a warning. But when all was over, Lu Meng had the body buried decently and wept at the

grave for the loss of his friend. Never after this was there the least laxity of discipline.

When Sun Quan visited the city, Lu Meng met him at the boundary and led him to the official residence, where Sun Quan issued rewards and commendations. This done, Sun Quan ordered Pan Jun to take charge of the new possession. Yu Jin, who was in prison, was freed and sent back to Cao Cao. When the people had been comforted and the soldiers rewarded, there was a great banquet in honor of the success of the expedition.

Then, said Sun Quan to Lu Meng, "We have gotten the city of Jingzhou, but now Fu Shiren is holding Gong'an, and Mi Fang, Nanjun. How can we get these two territories?"

Suddenly, Yu Fan started up and offered his services. "You will need neither bows nor arrows," said Yu Fan, "unless my little tongue is worn out. I can persuade Fu Shiren to surrender."

"Friend Yu Fan, how will you do it?" asked Sun Quan.

"Fu Shiren and I are very old friends, ever since we were boys. If I explain the matter to him, I am sure he will come over to this side."

So Yu Fan, with an escort, left quickly for Gong'an, where his friend was in command.

Now when Fu Shiren heard of the capture of Jingzhou, he closed his gates. Yu Fan arrived, but was refused entrance. So Yu Fan wrote a letter, attached

it to an arrow, and shot it over the city wall. A soldier picked it up and took it to his commander, who found therein much persuasion to surrender.

Having read all this, he thought within himself, *I think I should do well in surrender, for at his departure Guan Yu was very bitter against me.*

Without further ado, he bade the wardens open the gate, and his friend came in. After their greetings, they talked of old times, and Yu Fan praised Sun Quan's magnanimity and liberality and greatness generally. So finally, Fu Shiren decided to exchange masters and went away, taking with him his seal of office. He was presented to Sun Quan, who reappointed him to the command of Gong'an under its new lord.

Lu Meng thought the appointment imprudent and said to Sun Quan, "Guan Yu is yet unconquered. We should not put Fu Shiren in Gong'an. Instead, send him to Nanjun to induce his former colleague and fellow Mi Fang to join him in desertion to the enemy."

Lu Meng's advice was followed, and Fu Shiren was recalled.

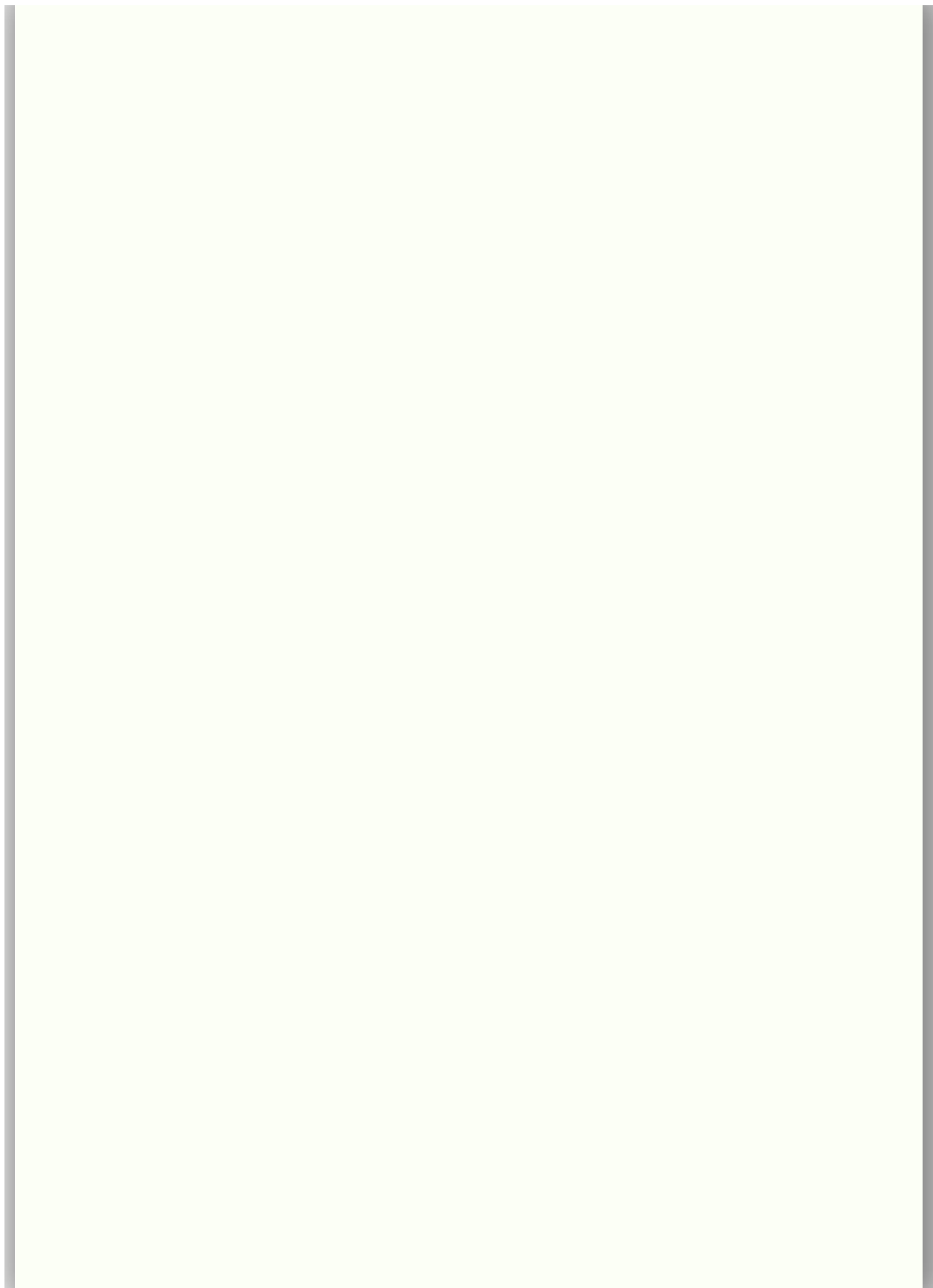
"Go to Nanjun and win over Mi Fang, and I will reward you richly," said Sun Quan.

Fu Shiren accepted the mission and duly left for Nanjun.

Jingzhou's defenders failed when tried,
So Wang Fu's words were justified.

For the events of the journey, see the next chapter.





Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVIII

CHAPTER 76

XU HUANG FIGHTS AT THE RIVER MIAN; GUAN YU RETREATS TO MAICHENG.

The fall of Jingzhou put Mi Fang in a quandary. Before he could decide upon any course, his old colleague Fu Shiren came to see him. Fu Shiren was admitted, and when asked why he had come, he blurted out his business without beating about the bush.

“I am faithful enough, but I got into difficulties and danger and could not hold on, so I have surrendered to Wu. And I advise you to do the same.”

“You and I have both fed on the bounty of the Prince of Hanzhong, and I cannot understand how you can turn against him.”

“Guan Yu went away hating both of us intensely. Even if he comes back victorious, I do not think he will forgive us. Just think it over.”

“My brother and I have followed the Prince these many years, and I do not like leaving him like this.” Mi Fang hesitated.

Before he could make up his mind, there came a messenger, saying, “The army in Fancheng is short of grain, and I was sent to demand white rice for the soldiers. Nanjun and Gongan are to send ten thousand carts at once. Delay will be most severely punished.”

This sudden demand was a shock to Mi Fang.

“Where am I to get the rice?” said he despairingly to his friend and tempter. “Jingzhou is now in the hands of Wu.”

“Do not dilly-dally,” said Fu Shiren. Thereupon, he drew his sword and slew the messenger as he stood in the hall.

“What have you done?” cried Mi Fang.

“Guan Yu wanted to slay us two and has forced me to this. Are we to fold our hands and await death? Either you give in at once and go over to Wu, or you will be put to death by Guan Yu.”

Just then, they heard that Lu Meng’s troops had actually reached the city wall. Mi Fang saw that nothing could save his life but desertion, so he went out with Fu Shiren and gave in his allegiance to Lu Meng, by whom he was led to Sun Quan. Sun Quan gave both of them presents, after which he proceeded to restore order and to reward his army for their services.

At the time that great discussion about Jingzhou was going on in Xuchang, a messenger arrived with a letter from Sun Quan. It told the plan of attacking Jingzhou and begged Cao Cao to send an army to attack Guan Yu in the rear, enjoining the utmost secrecy.

Cao Cao summoned his advisers to a meeting for consultation.

First Secretary Dong Zhao said, “Now that Fancheng is surrounded, it would be well to shoot a letter into the city to let the besieged know, so that they may not yield to depression. Then we will inform Guan Yu of the danger from the south. If Guan Yu hears that Jingzhou is threatened by Wu, he will come back to try to defend it. Then let Xu Huang take the chance to attack, and our victory will be complete.”

Cao Cao agreed that the plan was good, and so he sent a messenger to urge Xu Huang to attack. Cao Cao himself led a large force to Yangling Slope, south of Luoyang, to rescue Cao Ren.

Xu Huang was sitting in his tent when they told him that a messenger from the Prince of Wei had arrived.

The messenger was called in and said, "The Prince has led an army to Luoyang, and he wishes you to hasten to attack Guan Yu in order to relieve Fancheng."

Just then, the scouts came to report: "Guan Ping has encamped at Yencheng and Liao Hua at Sizhong. The enemy have built a line of twelve stockades."

Xu Huang ordered two of his generals—Lu Qian and Xu Shang—to Yencheng to masquerade as if he himself were in command, by showing his ensigns. Xu Huang himself, at the head of five hundred veterans, went along River Mian to attack Yencheng in the rear.

When Guan Ping heard of the approach of Xu Huang, he prepared his own division to meet him. When both sides were arrayed, Guan Ping rode out and engaged Xu Shang. After three encounters, Xu Shang had the worst of it and fled. Then the other general, Lu Qian, went out. He fought half-a-dozen bouts and also ran away. Thereupon, Guan Ping went in pursuit and smote the flying enemy for seven miles.

But then there was an alarm of fire within Yencheng, and Guan Ping knew that he had been inveigled into the pursuit and was a victim. So he turned and set out for the city again. On his way, he met a body of troops, and standing under the great standard was Xu Huang.

Xu Huang shouted out, "Guan Ping, my worthy nephew, it is strange that you do not recognize death when it stares you in the face. Your Jingzhou has fallen into the hands of Wu, and yet you act so madly."

Guan Ping, whirling his sword, just rode hard at Xu Huang, and they engaged. But after the third bout there was a tremendous shouting among the soldiers, for the flames within the city burst up higher than before. Guan Ping could not follow up his desire to continue the fight, but cut his way out and made a dash for Sizhong, where Liao Hua received him with the news of the disaster to Jingzhou.

"People say that Jingzhou has fallen to Lu Meng, and the news has frightened the whole army. What is to be done?" said Liao Hua.

"It is only a malicious rumor. Do not let it spread. If anyone repeats it, put him to death."

Just then a man came running in to say that Xu Huang was attacking the first stockade on the north.

"If that goes," said Guan Ping, "the remainder will follow. But as we have River Mian at our back, they will not dare attack here. Let us go to the rescue."

So Liao Hua summoned his subordinate leaders and gave them orders to hold the camp and make a signal if the enemy came.

"There is no danger here," said they. "The camp is defended by a tenfold line of thorny barriers. Even a bird could not get in."

Guan Ping and Liao Hua mustered all the veterans they had and went away to the first stockade.

Seeing the Wei soldiers camped on a low hill, Guan Ping said to his colleague, "Those soldiers are stationed in an unsafe place. Let us raid their camp tonight."

“You take half the force, General, and I will remain to keep the camp,” said Liao Hua.

When night fell, the attacking force went out. But on reaching the camp, not a man opposed them. The camp was empty. Then Guan Ping knew he had been deceived, and he turned to retreat. He was at once attacked on two sides by Xu Shang and Lu Qian from left and right. Unable to stand, his troops ran for the camp. The soldiers of Wei followed, and presently, the camp was surrounded. They were compelled to abandon the position and set off for Sizhong. As they drew near, they saw torches, and presently knew by the ensigns displayed that the camp had also fallen to the enemy. Retiring, they hastened along the high road toward Fancheng, but presently their way was barred by a force under Xu Huang himself. By dint of hard fighting they got away and returned to their main camp, and Guan Ping went to his father.

Said he, “Xu Huang has gotten possession of Yencheng. Cao Cao’s main army is on the way in three divisions. And many say that Jingzhou is in the enemy’s hands.”

Guan Yu bade him be silent.

“This is a fabrication of the enemy,” said Guan Yu, “but it may dishearten the soldiers. We know Lu Meng is ill, and they have appointed that impractical fellow Lu Xun to succeed him at Lukou. There is nothing to fear.”

Then news came that Xu Huang had arrived. At once, Guan Yu bade them saddle his charger.

“Father, you are not strong enough to go into the battle,” said Guan Ping.

“Xu Huang and I were once friends, and I know what he can do and can not do. I will give him the chance to retire. If he does not take it, then I shall just slay him as a warning to the others.”

Mounting his charger, Guan Yu rode out as impetuously as of yore, and the sight of the old warrior made quake the hearts of the troops of Wei.

When he came close enough to his enemy, Guan Yu checked his steed and said, “Where is my friend Xu Huang?”

As a reply, the gate of the battle opened, and Xu Huang appeared under the standard.

With a low bow, Xu Huang said, “Some years have passed since I met you, Most Excellent Marquis, but I had not expected to see you so gray. I have not forgotten the old brave days, when we were together and you taught me so much, and I am very grateful. Your new fame has spread throughout the whole empire, and your old friends cannot but praise you. I am indeed glad that I have the good fortune to see you.”

Guan Yu replied, “We have been excellent friends, Xu Huang—better than most. But why have you pressed my son so hardly of late?”

Xu Huang suddenly turned to the officers about him and cried fiercely, “I would give a thousand ounces of gold for this Guan Yu’s head.”

Guan Yu, greatly shocked, said, “What did you say that for?”

“Because today I am on state business, and I have no inclination to let private friendship override my public duty.”

As he said this, he whirled his battleax and rode at Guan Yu, who, greatly enraged, threw up his great saber to strike. They fought a half-score bouts, but although his skill lacked nothing of its pristine vigor and excelled all the world, the veteran warrior’s right arm was still weak from the

wound. Guan Ping saw that his father failed somewhat, and so hastily beat the gong for retreat. Guan Yu rode back.

Suddenly, the noise of a great shouting was heard. It came from the troops in Fancheng, for Cao Ren, having heard of the arrival of troops of his own side, had made a sortie and was about to attack to help Xu Huang. His army fell on, and the army of Jingzhou was routed. Guan Yu, with as many of his officers as could, fled away along the banks of River Xiang, hotly pursued by the army of Wei. Crossing the river, he made for Xiangyang.

Suddenly, the scouts reported: "Jingzhou has been taken by Lu Meng. Your family is now in the hands of the enemy."

Guan Yu was shocked. Thence he marched for Gong'an.

But the scouts told him: "Fu Shiren has yielded Gong'an to the hands of Wu."

Then some of the men he had dispatched for supplies came in and reported: "Fu Shiren murdered the officer and persuaded Mi Fang to surrender to Wu."

The story filled Guan Yu with boundless rage. It was too much. The wound reopened, and he fell in a swoon.

"Wang Fu, you were right," said he when he recovered consciousness. "How I regret that I did not heed what you said!"

"But why were the beacon fires not lighted?" continued he presently.

Said the scouts, "Lu Meng's marines, in the guise of traders, came over the river. There were soldiers hidden in the ships, and they seized the beacon guards, so preventing them from kindling the fires."

Guan Yu sighed. Beating the ground with his foot, he said, "Indeed I have fallen into their trap. How shall I look my Brother in the face?"

Then, out spoke Commissariat Commander Zhao Lei, saying, “We are in straits. Send to Chengdu for help, and let us take the land road to Jingzhou to try to recover it.”

So Guan Yu sent Ma Liang and Yi Ji to Shu to ask for help. The messengers rode out swiftly by different routes, while the army set out to return to Jingzhou, Guan Yu leading and Liao Hua with Guan Ping keeping the rear.

The siege of Fancheng being thus raised, Cao Ren went to see his master. With tears he acknowledged his fault and asked pardon.

“It was the will of heaven, and no fault of yours,” said Cao Cao.

And he rewarded the armies.

When he visited Sizhong and had inspected the captured stockades, he remarked on the defenses, saying, “Xu Huang was very clever to overcome these. With my thirty years of war, I would not have dared to penetrate such opposition. He is valiant and wise, and both to a high degree.”

“Aye,” said they with him, for they could not but agree.

Cao Cao’s army marched back to Mopo and there camped. When Xu Huang returned, Cao Cao went out of the stockade to meet him, and clapped with joy when seeing the excellent order and discipline that his army showed. Every soldier was in his place, the ranks perfectly kept, all without a trace of disorder.

“General Xu Huang has the spirit of the old Zhou Yafu,” said Cao Cao, and on the spot conferred on his commander the title of General Who Pacifies the South. Xu Huang was sent soon after to share in the defense of Xiangyang with Xiahou Shang and to meet Guan Yu’s army.

Jingzhou being still in turmoil, Cao Cao remained at Mopo waiting for news.

Guan Yu found himself at a standstill on the road to Jingzhou, with the army of Wu in front and the men of Wei coming up behind.

“What is to be done,” he discussed the position with Zhao Lei, “when we cannot advance nor retreat and aid has not come?”

Zhao Lei proposed a halt to try to shame Lu Meng into aiding Cao Cao. Said he, “When Lu Meng was at Lukou, he used to write to you often, and you agreed to join hands in the destruction of Cao Cao. Now, he is a traitor and fighting on the other side. Send a letter and reproach him. Perhaps we may get a satisfactory reply.”

So the letter was written and sent to Jingzhou.

Meanwhile, by Lu Meng’s special command, the most complete protection was given to the families of all the officers who were serving under Guan Yu, and they were kept supplied with all they required. Even the ailing members of their households were treated by physicians free of charge. The result was that they were quite won over to the new order of things, and there was no attempt to disturb it. When Guan Yu’s letter came, the messenger was led into the city and well-treated.

When Lu Meng read the letter, he said to the bearer thereof, “You must understand the different circumstances. When your general and I were leagued together, it was a personal matter between us two. Now things have changed. I am sent here with certain orders and am not my own master. I would trouble you, O messenger, to return and explain thus to your master and in good words.”

The bearer of the letter was entertained at a banquet and sent to repose himself in the guesthouse, where the families of the absent officers sought him to have news of their husbands and fathers. Moreover, they brought him letters and gave him messages for the officers, and the whole tenor of these letters and messages was that they were all in good health, all their needs were supplied, and they lacked nothing. When he left the city, Lu Meng himself escorted him to the outskirts and set him on his way.

On his return to the army, he gave to Guan Yu the message of Lu Meng and told him that the families were all well and safe and well-cared for. This, however, greatly displeased Guan Yu.

Stamping his foot, Guan Yu said, "This is merely a ruse to gain favor and popularity. The brigand! If I cannot slay him while I live, I will after I am dead. My hate shall not go unappeased."

He roughly dismissed the messenger, who went out and was at once surrounded by those whose families were in the city and who desired to have news of them. And when he gave them the letters and messages and told them all were well, there was great rejoicing among the men in the camp, and kindly feelings for Lu Meng prevailed. And therewith died down the spirit of fighting.

Guan Yu led the army to attack Jingzhou, but day by day the men deserted and ran away to the very city they were moving to attack. So day by day Guan Yu's bitterness and anger increased, and he advanced in angry haste.

One day, there was a great shouting and the noise of drums, and he found his way blocked.

"Why do you not surrender, friend Guan Yu?" said the leader of this body, Jiang Qin.

“Could I give in to a rebel—I, a servant of the Hans and a leader of their army?” roared Guan Yu in a passion.

Thereupon, he whipped his horse forward and swung up his sword to strike. However, Jiang Qin would not fight. The two exchanged a few blows, and Jiang Qin fled. Guan Yu followed. When he had gone a long way, there suddenly appeared from a gully near him Han Dang, while Zhou Tai came out from the other side. Thereupon, Jiang Qin wheeled round and once more came to do battle, so that three forces were opposed to Guan Yu. Unable to withstand these, Guan Yu retreated.

Before he had gone very far, the veteran saw signs of many people bivouacking among the hills, and presently made out, on a huge, white banner that flapped in the breeze, the words “Natives of Jingzhou,” and the people about were calling out, “All the inhabitants of this place have surrendered.”

Guan Yu felt like rushing up and cutting these people to pieces, but just then two other cohorts appeared, led by Ding Feng and Xu Sheng, who supported Jiang Qin. The three bodies of troops then set on with shouting and loud beating of drums that seemed to make the very earth tremble. And Guan Yu was like the kernel in a nut, quite surrounded.

This was not all. He saw the number of his followers diminishing every moment. He fought on till dusk, and looking about him, he saw all the hills crowded with Jingzhou folks and heard them calling, siblings for brother and children for father, till his soldiers’ hearts had melted within them. One by one, they ran to their relatives, heedless of their leader and his voice. Presently he had but three hundred left, but with them he kept up the battle till the third watch. Then there was another shouting in another note, for his leaders, Guan Ping, his son, and Liao Hua, came to his help. And they rescued him.

“The soldiers’ hearts are all melted,” said Guan Ping. “We must find some place wherein to camp till help can arrive. There is Maicheng: small, but sufficient. Let us camp there.”

Guan Yu consented, and the exhausted army hurried thither as quickly as they could. The small force was divided among the four gates to guard.

Zhao Lei said, “This place is near Shangyong where Meng Da and Liu Feng are stationed. We should send for their help. If their army marches to our relief until the grand army of Shu comes, the morale of our army will improve.”

But disappointments dogged them. Very soon, the army of Wu came up and laid siege to the city.

“Who will try to break through and go away to Shangyong for assistance?” asked Guan Yu.

“I will go,” said Liao Hua.

“And I will escort you past the danger zone,” said Guan Ping.

Guan Yu wrote his letter, which Liao Hua concealed next to his skin, and having eaten a full meal, he rode out at the gate. The leader of the enemy, Ding Feng, tried to check him, but Guan Ping fought vigorously and drove him away. So Liao Hua escaped the siege and reached Shangyong, while Guan Ping returned. Then, they barred the gates and held their defense.

Now, having captured Shangyong, Liu Feng and Meng Da had remained to guard it. Liu Feng had been created Governor General, and together with Meng Da, to defend that city. When they heard of the defeat of Guan Yu,

they took counsel what to do. When Liao Hua came, he was admitted into the city. He told the tale of Guan Yu's straits, and asked for help.

Said Liao Hua, "Guan Yu is closely besieged in Maicheng. Help from the west will be a long time in coming, so I have been sent to beg your assistance. I hope you will march the Shangyong troops thither as quickly as possible, for any delay will be fatal."

Liu Feng replied, "Sir, go to the rest house for a time till we can decide."

So Liao Hua went, and the two leaders talked over the matter.

Liu Feng said, "This is bad news. What is to be done?"

"Wu is very powerful," replied his colleague. "Now that they have control over the whole region of Jingzhou, save this small clod of earth called Maicheng. Cao Cao is at hand with five hundred thousand troops, and we cannot stand against the two mighty forces. I say we must not move."

"I know all this. But Guan Yu is my uncle, and I cannot bear to sit still and not try to save him."

"So you hold him as an uncle!" said Meng Da with a smile. "Yet I do not think he holds you much as a nephew. When the Prince of Hanzhong adopted you, Guan Yu was greatly annoyed. And after the Prince had accepted his new dignity and was nominating his heir, I heard that he consulted Zhuge Liang, who said the affair was one to be decided within the family and declined to advise. Then the Prince sent to ask Guan Yu's advice. Did Guan Yu name you? Not at all. You were only a son by adoption and could have no place in the succession. Further, Guan Yu advised that you be sent to a distance lest you might cause trouble. This is common knowledge, and I am surprised that you are ignorant of it. Yet

today you make capital out of the relationship and are willing to run a great risk to support it.”

“Granted that what you say is true, still, what reply can we give?”

“Simply say that this city is still unsettled, and you dare not move lest it be lost.”

Liu Feng took his colleague’s view, sent for the messenger and told him. Liao Hua was greatly disappointed. He threw himself on the ground and knocked his head, imploring assistance.

“If you act thus, it is the end of Guan Yu!” cried Liao Hua.

“Will a cup of water extinguish a wagon load of blazing wood?” said Meng Da. “Hasten back and await patiently for the coming of help from the west.”

Liao Hua renewed his entreaties. The two commanders simply rose, shook out their sleeves, and left him. Liao Hua saw that things had gone against him and thought his best course would be to go at once to Chengdu. He rode out of the city cursing its defenders and went away west.

Guan Yu from his fortress looked anxiously, but vainly, for the coming of the expected aid. He was in a sorry plight. His army numbered but a few hundred, many wounded; there was no food.

Then someone came to the foot of the wall and, calling out to the defenders on the wall not to shoot, said he had a message for the commander. He was allowed to enter. It was Zhuge Jin. When he had made his salutations and taken tea, he began his harangue.

“I come at the command of my master, the Marquis of Wu, to persuade you to a wise course. It has always been recognized that the hero must bow to circumstances. The region, with its nine territories and forty-two counties, that you ruled has come under another, with the exception of this single city. Within, there is no food, without, no help, so that it must fall quickly. Wherefore, O General, why not hear me and join your fortunes to those of Wu? You shall be restored to your governorship, and you will preserve your family. If haply, Sir, you would reflect thereon.”

Guan Yu replied, quite calmly, “I am a simple soldier from the village of Jieliang, yet my lord and I have become Brothers. How can I betray him? If the city may fall, then I can but die. Jade may be shattered, but its whiteness remains; bamboo may be burned, but its joints stand straight. My body may be broken, but my name shall live true in history. Say no more, but leave the city, I beg. I will fight Sun Quan to the end.”

“My master desires to enter into such a league with you as did Qin and Jin in former days, that you may mutually assist to destroy Cao Cao and restore the Hans. That is his idea; why do you persist in this wrong course?”

As Zhuge Jin finished this speech, Guan Ping, who was by, drew his sword to slay him. But his father checked him.

“Remember: his brother is in Shu, helping your uncle. If you hurt him, you will injure the principle of fraternity.”

Guan Yu then bade his servants lead Zhuge Jin away. Zhuge Jin went, his face covered with shame, and left the city. When he reached his master, he told of Guan Yu’s obduracy and rejection of all argument.

“He is indeed a loyal servant!” said Sun Quan. “Still, what is to be done next?”

“Take some casts in the *Book of Changes*,” said Lu Fan.

So the lots were taken and explained to mean that the Marquis' enemies should flee to a distance.

Then Sun Quan asked Lu Meng, saying, "If he flies to a distance, how can he be captured?"

"The divination exactly fits in with my schemes," replied Lu Meng. "Even if Guan Yu had wings to soar to the skies, he would not escape my net."

The dragon in a puddle is the sport of shrimps,
The phoenix in a cage is mocked by small birds.

The scheme of Lu Meng will be unfolded in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XVIII

CHAPTER 77

CAO CAO IS HAUNTED AT LUOYANG; GUAN YU MANIFESTS AT THE JADE SPRING MOUNT.

Sun Quan having asked Lu Meng for a plan, Lu Meng replied, "This Guan Yu has very few soldiers left, and he will not venture along the high road. North of Maicheng is a risky path, and he will try to escape along that. Therefore you must lay an ambush for him seven miles away from the city, but do not stop him. Let him go by, and then harass his rear. Thus he will be forced into Linju. Set another small ambush near there, and you will capture your enemy. For the present, attack the city vigorously on all sides but one, leaving the north gate for escape."

Before carrying out this plan, Sun Quan bade Lu Fan consult the auspices.

Lu Fan did so, announcing, "The enemy will flee toward the northwest, but will be caught that night before midnight."

So Zhu Ran was sent in command of the first ambush, and Pan Zhang was the second. The troops sent were all veterans.

When Guan Yu mustered his fighting men in the city of Maicheng, he had but three hundred. The food was done. That night, many soldiers of Wu came to the city walls and called to their friends by name, and many of these slipped over the wall and deserted, reducing the small force still

further. No rescue force appeared, and Guan Yu was at the end of his resources.

Again he bewailed to Wang Fu, saying, "I regret that I have neglected your wise warning. In this danger, what is to be done?"

"I think even if Lu Wang could come to life again, he would be helpless in this case," replied Wang Fu, weeping.

Said Zhao Lei, "Liu Feng and Meng Da have surely decided not to send help from Shangyong. Let us abandon this miserable place, try to get to Yizhou, and recover the army. We may then tempt our fortune once more."

"I agree with you that that is the best plan," said Guan Yu.

Then he ascended the walls and surveyed the country. Noting that the weakest side was the north, he called in some of the inhabitants and inquired the nature of the country on that side.

They replied, "There are only roads there, but by them, one may get into the West River Land."

"We will go that way tonight," said Guan Yu.

Wang Fu opposed it, saying, "General, you will surely fall into an ambush. The main road will be safer."

"There may be an ambush, but do I fear that?" said the old warrior.

Orders were given to be ready to march.

"At least be very cautious," said Wang Fu. "I will defend this city to the very last. I only need a hundred troops. Never will we surrender. Only I hope, Most Noble General, that you will send me speedy help."

The two parted in tears. Wang Fu and Zhou Cang remaining to guard Maicheng, Guan Yu, Guan Ping, and Zhao Lei marched with their weak

force out of the north gate. Guan Yu, his Green-Dragon Saber ready at hand, went first.

About the third watch, seven miles lay between them and the city. There, they saw a deep cleft in the hills whence rolled the sound of beaten drums. And men were shouting. Soon appeared a large force with Zhu Ran at their head.

He came dashing forward, and summoned the small party, saying, "Guan Yu, do not run! Surrender and live!"

But Guan Yu whipped his steed to a gallop and bore down on the leader with anger in his eyes. Then Zhu Ran ran away. Guan Yu followed him till there came the loud boom of a large drum, and out sprang troops from all sides. Guan Yu dared not engage such a number and fled in the direction of Linju. Zhu Ran came up behind and attacked the flying soldiers so that Guan Yu's following gradually became smaller and smaller.

Still he struggled on. A few miles farther, the drums rolled again, and torches lit up all round. This was Pan Zhang's ambush, and he appeared flourishing his sword. Guan Yu whirled his blade and went to meet him, but Pan Zhang ran away after a couple of bouts. However, Guan Yu saw they were too many for him, and sought refuge among the mountains.

His son followed, and when he got within speaking distance, Guan Ping gave him the mournful tidings: "Zhao Lei has fallen in the melee!"

Guan Yu was very sad, and bade his son try to protect the rear while he should force his way forward.

With about ten men he reached Zhuxi, a place with mountains on both sides. At their feet was a thick mass of reeds and dried grass. The trees grew very close.

It was then the fifth watch. Presently, the small party stumbled into another ambush, and the ambushing soldiers thrust forth hooks and threw ropes. Entangled in these, Guan Yu's horse fell, and Guan Yu reeled out of the saddle. In a moment, Ma Zhong, the Marching General of Pan Zhang, made him a prisoner. Guan Ping dashed to his rescue, but before he could do anything, he also was surrounded and held. Father and son were both captives.

With great joy Sun Quan heard of the success of his plans. In the morning, he assembled all his officers in his tent to await the arrival of the prisoners. Before long, Ma Zhong came hustling his prisoner before his lord.

"I have long had a friendly feeling for you," said Sun Quan to Guan Yu, "on account of your great virtues. Now I would have made a covenant and alliance with you, if you would. You and your son have long held yourselves to be invincible, but you see you are my prisoners today. Yet I hope to win you over to my side."

But Guan Yu only answered roughly, "You green-eyed boy! You purple-bearded rat! I made a covenant in the Peach Garden with my Brothers to uphold the Hans. Think you that I will stand side-by-side with a rebel such as you are? I am a victim of your vile schemes, but I can only die once. And there is no need of many words."

"He is a real hero, and I love him," said Sun Quan to those standing near. "I will treat him well and endeavor to win him over. Do you think it well?"

Said the First Secretary Zuo Xian, "When Cao Cao had hold of this man, Cao Cao treated him lavishly well. Cao Cao created him a marquis; in

three-day intervals Cao Cao held a small banquet, in five days a great one; Cao Cao gave him gold and presented him with silver; all this, hoping to retain him at his side. But Cao Cao failed. The man broke through his gates, slew his six generals in five passes and went away. Today, Cao Cao fears him, and almost moved the capital for dread of him. Now he is in your power, destroy him, or you will rue the day. Evil will come if you spare him.”

Sun Quan reflected for some time.

“You are right,” said he presently, and gave the order for execution.

So father and son met their fate together in the winter of the twenty-fourth year (AD 219) in the tenth month. Guan Yu was fifty-eight.



A poem says:

Peerless indeed was our Lord Guan Yu, of the latter
days,
Head and shoulders stood he out among the best;
Godlike and terrible in war, elegant and refined in
peace,
Resplendent as the noonday sun in the heavens,
Haloed as are the noblest of those early days,
He stands, the brightest model for all ages,
And not only for the strenuous days he lived in.

And another:

Seek ye a noble one? Then take ye the way of Jieliang,

Watch ye how all people revere Guan Yu,
Each excelling others to honor him,
Him, one of the Three Brothers of the Peach Garden
Oath,
Who have won sacrifices, as emperor and king.
Incomparable their aura spreads through the world;
They are resplendent as the great lights of the
firmament;
Temples to our Lord Guan Yu abound, no village lacks
one,
Their venerable trees at sundown are the resting places
for birds.



So Guan Yu ended his life. His famous steed, Red Hare, also captured with its master, was sent to Sun Quan, who gave it as a reward to his captor, Ma Zhong. But Red Hare survived its master only a short time. It refused to feed, and soon died.

Foreboding of misfortune came to Wang Fu within the city of Maicheng. His bones felt cold, and his flesh crept.

He said to his colleague Zhou Cang, “I have had a terrible dream in which I saw our lord all dripping with gore. I would question him, but I was overcome with dread. May it augur no evil tidings!”

Just then, the troops of Wu came up to the city wall and displayed the gory heads of the two, father and son. Wang Fu and Zhou Cang went up on the wall to see if the dread tokens were real. There was no doubt. Wang Fu

with a despairing cry threw himself over the wall and perished; Zhou Cang died by his own hand. Thus, Maicheng fell to Wu.

The execution of Guan Yu gave Sun Quan undisputed possession of the whole of the Jingzhou Region. He rewarded his soldiers and spread a great feast at which Lu Meng was in the seat of honor.

Sun Quan made a speech, saying, "After long waiting, the desire of my heart has come to me very easily through the magnificent efforts of my friend Lu Meng."

Lu Meng bowed and bowed deprecatingly, but Sun Quan continued, "My good Zhou Yu was superior to most humans, and he defeated Cao Cao at the Red Cliffs. Alas! He died too soon. My good Lu Su succeeded him. In his first interview, he inaugurated the general policy of creating a state. That was the first instance of his keen insight. When Cao Cao descended upon my country, and everyone counseled me to yield, he advised me to summon my good Zhou Yu to oppose and smite Cao Cao. That was the second instance of his keen insight. He made only one fault: he advised me to let Liu Bei occupy Jingzhou. Now today, my good Lu Meng has succeeded, and in that, he far surpasses both his predecessors."

Then Sun Quan filled a goblet and in person presented it to the guest of the evening. Lu Meng took the cup, but as he raised it, a sudden change came over him.

Dashing the cup to the ground, Lu Meng seized Sun Quan, crying, "O green-eyed boy! O purple-bearded rat! Do you know me?"

Consternation seized the whole assembly, but many rushed to the rescue of their lord, who had been thrown to the floor by the guest he had so

lately complimented. Rushing forward over Sun Quan's body, Lu Meng sat himself in the host's seat, his eyebrows staring stiff and his eyes glaring.

"After I quelled the Yellow Scarves, I went hither and thither for thirty years. Now I have fallen victim to your base plots, and you have overcome me. Living, I have been unable to gorge upon the flesh of my enemy; dead, I will pursue the spirit of this bandit Lu Meng. I am the Lord of Hanshou, Guan Yu!"

Terror-stricken, Sun Quan was the first to fall prostrate, and all his officers followed him.

Thereupon, Lu Meng fell over dead, with blood gushing from the seven orifices of his body.

In due time, the body was coffined and interred. Lu Meng was created posthumously Governor of Nanjun and Lord of Chanling. His son, Lu Ba, was given hereditary nobility.

After this visitation, Sun Quan lived in constant terror. Soon Zhang Zhao came in from Jianye to see him and blame him for the murder.

"My lord, by the slaughter of Guan Yu you have brought misfortune very near to this state. You know the Oath sworn in the Peach Garden. Now Liu Bei has the force of the two River Lands at his back, Zhuge Liang as adviser, and those heroes Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun, Huang Zhong, and Ma Chao to carry out his behests. When Liu Bei hears of the death of both father and son, he will set in motion the whole force he has to avenge them, and I fear you cannot stand such an onslaught."

Sun Quan started up in a fright.

"Yes, I have made a little mistake," said he. "But seeing it is so, what shall I do?"

“You need have no fear,” replied Zhang Zhao. “I have a plan to fend off the armies of the west from our borders and keep Jingzhou quite safe.”

“What is your plan?” asked Sun Quan.

“Cao Cao, with his many legions, is greedily aiming at the whole empire. If Liu Bei wants revenge, he will ally himself with Cao Cao, and should they combine against the South Land, we should be in great danger. Therefore I advise you to send Guan Yu’s head to Cao Cao to make it appear that Cao Cao was the prime cause of his destruction. This should divert Liu Bei’s extreme hatred toward Cao Cao and send the armies of Shu against Wei instead of toward Wu. After carefully considering the whole matter, I counsel this as the best course of action.”

Sun Quan thought the move worth making, and so the head of the great warrior was placed in a box and sent off as quickly as possible to Cao Cao.

At this time, Cao Cao’s army had marched back from Mopo to Luoyang. When he heard of the coming of the gruesome gift, he was glad at heart.

Said he, “So Guan Yu is dead. Now I can stick to my mat and sleep soundly at night.”

But Sima Yi saw through the ruse and said from his place by the steps, “This is a trick to divert evil from Wu.”

“What do you mean? How?” said Cao Cao.

“The Peach Garden Oath bound the Three Brothers to live and die together. Now, Wu is fearful of revenge for the execution of one of the Three and sends the head to you to cause Liu Bei’s wrath to fasten on you, O Prince; Sun Quan wishes Liu Bei to attack you instead of himself, the

real perpetrator of the crime. Then he will find a way of accomplishing his ends while you two are quarreling.”

“You are right, friend,” said Cao Cao. “And now how can we escape?”

“I think escape is easy. You have the head of Guan Yu. Make a wooden image of the remainder of the body, and bury the whole with the rites suitable to a minister of state. When Liu Bei hears of this, he will turn his hate toward Sun Quan and raise all his forces to attack him. If you will think it out, you will see that whichever is victor, the other will be smitten, and if we get one of the two, the other will follow before very long.”

Cao Cao was pleased with the solution. Then he ordered the messenger to come in with the box, which was opened, and he looked upon the face of the dead. The features had not changed; the face bore the same appearance as of old. Cao Cao smiled.

“I hope you have been well since our last meeting, Guan Yu,” said Cao Cao.

To his horror, the mouth opened, the eyes rolled, and the long beard and hair stiffened. Cao Cao fell to the ground in a swoon.

They rushed to him, but it was a long time before he recovered consciousness.

“General Guan Yu is indeed a spirit,” he said.

The messenger who had brought the dead warrior’s head told the story of Guan Yu cursing and reviling Sun Quan, and of what had befallen Lu Meng.

Cao Cao, filled with dread, prepared sacrifices and performed the rites for the honored dead. An effigy was carved out of heavy, fragrant wood and buried outside the south gate with all the rites of a princely noble, a huge concourse of officials of all grades following in the procession. At the

funeral, Cao Cao himself bowed before the coffin and poured a libation. He also conferred on the dead the posthumous title of Prince of Jingzhou, and appointed guardians of the tomb. The messenger was sent back to Wu.

Now the spirit of Guan Yu did not dissipate into space, but wandered through the void till it came to a certain spot in Dangyang on a famous hill known as the Mount of the Jade Spring. There lived a venerable Buddhist priest whose name in the faith was Transverse Peace. He was originally of the State Guardian Temple at the River Si Pass and priest of that temple. In the course of roaming about the world, he had reached this place. Entranced with its natural beauty, he had built himself a shelter of boughs and grass, where he sat in meditation on the "Way." He had a novice with him to beg food and to attend to his simple wants.

This night, about the third watch, the moon was bright and the air serene. Transverse Peace sat in his usual attitude in the silence of the mountains.

Suddenly, he heard a great voice calling in the upper air, "Give back my head! Give back my head!"

Gazing upward, Transverse Peace saw the shape of a man mounted on a red horse. In the hand was a shining blade like upon the Green-Dragon Saber. Two military figures were with him, one on either side. He on the left had a white face; he on the right was swarthy of countenance with a curly beard. And they followed the figure with the shining blade. They floated along on a cloud which came to rest on the summit of the mountain.

The recluse recognized the figure as that of Guan Yu, so with his yak's tail flagellum he smote the lintel of his hut and cried, "Where is Guan Yu?"

The spirit understood, and the figure dismounted, glided down, and came to rest at the door of the hut. Interlacing its fingers, it stood in a reverential attitude and said, "Who is my teacher, and what is his name in the faith?"

"In the State Guardian Temple in River Si Pass, I once saw you, O Noble Sir, and I was not likely to forget your face," replied the priest.

"I am deeply grateful for the help you gave me. Misfortune has befallen me, and I have ceased to live. I would seek pure instruction and beg you to indicate the obscure way."

"Let us not discuss former wrongdoings nor present correct actions. Later events are the inevitable result of former causes. I know that Lu Meng has injured you. You call aloud for the return of your head. But who will also return the heads of your several victims: Yan Liang, Wen Chou, and the commanders of the five passes?"

Thereupon, Guan Yu seemed suddenly to comprehend; he bowed in token of assent, and disappeared. After this appearance to the recluse, his spirit wandered hither and thither about the mountain, manifesting its sacred character and guarding the people.

Impressed by his virtue, the inhabitants built a temple on the Mount of the Jade Spring, wherein they sacrificed at the four seasons. In later days, one wrote a couplet for the temple, the first member reading:

"Ruddy-faced, reflecting the honest heart within, outriding the wind on the Red Hare steed, mindful of the Red Emperor;

"In the light of a clear lamp, reading the histories, resting on the Green-Dragon Saber curved as the young moon, heart pure as the azure heaven."

Meanwhile in Shu, having conquered the East River Land, the Prince of Hanzhong returned to his capital Chengdu.

Fa Zheng petitioned, “O Prince, thy consorts have passed away, and the Lady Sun has returned to her maiden home, perhaps never to come again. Human relations should not be set at nought, wherefore another consort should be sought, so that all things may be correctly ordered within the Palace.”

The Prince having signified his acceptance of the principle, Fa Zheng continued, “There is the sister of Wu Yi, comely and good, and declared by the physiognomist as destined to high honor. She was betrothed to Liu Mao, son of Liu Yan, but he died in youth, and she has remained unwedded. Take her as a wife.”

“It is incompatible with propriety. Liu Mao and I are of the same ancestry.”

“As to the degree of relationship, would it differ from the marriage between Duke Wen of Jin and Lady Huai Ying?”

Upon this precedent, the Prince gave his consent and wedded the lady, and she bore to him two sons, the elder of whom was named Liu Yong and the younger Liu Li.

Meanwhile, the whole land of Shu was prospering, the people were tranquil, and the state was becoming wealthy. The fields in both River Lands yielded bountiful harvests.

Suddenly, there came one who told of the attempt of Sun Quan to ally himself with Guan Yu by marriage, and the indignant rejection of the proposal.

“Jingzhou is in danger,” said Zhuge Liang. “Recall and replace Guan Yu.”

Then began to arrive a series of messengers from Jingzhou, bearers of news of the moves in the game. At first they brought good tidings, then evil. Guan Xing came first to tell of the drowning of the seven armies of Yu Jin. Then, one reported the installation of beacon towers along the riverbank, and other preparations which seemed as near perfect as any could be. And Liu Bei’s anxiety ceased.

But evil tidings were on the way. Liu Bei was ill at ease and felt a creepiness of the skin that boded evil. He was restless by day and sleepless by night.

One night, he rose from his couch and was reading by the light of a candle when drowsiness overcame him, and he fell asleep over the low table by his side. He dreamed. A cold gust of wind swept through the chamber, almost putting out the candle flame. When it brightened again, he glanced up and saw a figure standing near the light.

“Who are you, who thus come by night to my chamber?” asked he.

The figure made no reply, and Liu Bei got up to go over and see who it was. Then the figure took the shape of his Brother. But it avoided him, retreating as he advanced.

Liu Bei said, “Brother, there is nothing wrong, I hope. But surely something of great importance brings you here thus in the dead of the night. And why do you avoid me, your Brother, who loves you as himself?”

Then the figure wept and said, “Brother, send your armies to avenge me.”

As Guan Yu said that, a chilly blast went through the room, and the figure disappeared. Just then, Liu Bei awoke and knew that he had dreamed.

The drums were beating the third watch as he awoke. He felt greatly worried and disturbed. So he went into the front portion of the Palace and sent for Zhuge Liang. Soon he came, and Liu Bei told him of the vision.

“You have been thinking too deeply of Guan Yu lately, my lord,” said Zhuge Liang. “There is no need to be distressed.”

But Liu Bei could not find comfort, and Zhuge Liang was long in calming his feelings and arguing away his fancies.

As Zhuge Liang left the building, he met Xu Jing, who said, “Instructor, I went to your residence to deliver a very secret piece of news, and they told me to find you here.”

“What is your secret?”

“There is a report that Wu has got possession of Jingzhou; Lu Meng has taken it. And more than that, Guan Yu is dead. I had to come to tell you.”

“I saw it in the sky some nights ago. A large star of a general fell over against Jingzhou, and I knew some evil had befallen Guan Yu. But I feared the effect upon our master, and I forbore to say anything.”

They did not know that Liu Bei was standing just within the door.

Suddenly, Liu Bei rushed out, seized Zhuge Liang by the sleeve, and said, “Why did you hide from me? Why, when you had such terrible news?”

“Because it is only a rumor,” replied they. “It is too improbable for belief. We pray you not to be distressed.”

“By our Oath, we live or die together. How can I go on living if he is lost?”

The two men soothed their lord as best they could. But even as they spoke to him, one of the private attendants said that Ma Liang and Yi Ji had arrived. Liu Bei called them in and questioned them eagerly.

They said, “Jingzhou has indeed been lost, and Guan Yu begs for instant help.”

The letters they brought had not been read before Liao Hua was ushered in. He prostrated himself and, weeping, told the story of the refusal of help on the part of Liu Feng and Meng Da.

“Then is my Brother lost!” cried Liu Bei.

“If those two have really behaved so badly, the offense is even too great for death,” said Zhuge Liang. “But calm yourself, O Prince. I will see about an army and lead it to the rescue.”

“If Guan Yu is gone, I cannot live,” moaned Liu Bei. “Tomorrow, I myself will set out with an army to rescue him.”

Liu Bei sent off a messenger to Zhang Fei in Langzhong and gave orders to muster cavalry and infantry for instant departure.

Before day dawned, other messengers arrived, giving step-by-step the sequence of the tragedy: “Guan Yu cut his way to Linju at night and was captured by a general of Wu. He refused to bend, and both father and son went to the Nine Springs.”

When he heard of the final catastrophe, Liu Bei uttered a great cry and fell swooning.

His mind went back to the Pledge of days gone by;
Could he live still and let his Brother die?

What happened will be told in the next chapter.



END OF ACT XVIII

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XIX:

SUCCESSION, AMBITION, AND
USURPATION:

THE END OF HAN

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XIX

CHAPTER 78

TREATING A HEADACHE, A FAMOUS PHYSICIAN DIES; GIVING HIS LAST WORDS, THE CRAFTY HERO DEPARTS.

As has been said, the Prince of Hanzhong swooned on hearing the terrible news of the death of the two Guans, father and son. His officers went to his help, and when he had recovered sufficiently, they led him to his private apartments.

“My lord, control your grief,” said Zhuge Liang. “Life and death are fixed by fate. Guan Yu brought the evil upon himself by his harshness and haughtiness. You must now take care of your health and nurture your vengeance.”

“When we swore brotherhood in the Peach Garden, we pledged ourselves to live or die together. What enjoyment of riches and honors is there for me now that my Brother is gone?”

Just then he saw Guan Yu’s son, Guan Xing, coming in weeping in deep distress. At sight of the youth, Liu Bei uttered a great cry and again sank to the earth. By and by, he came to, and he spent the whole day weeping and swooning at intervals. For three days he refused all nourishment, and he wept so bitterly that his garments were wetted, and there were spots of blood. Zhuge Liang and the others tried every means to soothe him, but he was inconsolable.

“I swear I will not live under the same heaven as Sun Quan,” cried he.

“It is said that the head of your Brother has been sent to Cao Cao, but Cao Cao has buried the remains with the rites of a princely noble,” said

Zhuge Liang.

“Why did he do that?” asked Liu Bei.

“Because Sun Quan thought thereby to bring evil upon Cao Cao. But Cao Cao saw through the subterfuge and has buried your Brother with great honor so that your anger may burn against Wu.”

“I want to send my armies to punish Wu and appease my wrath,” said Liu Bei.

“No, you may not do that. Wu wishes to move you to smite Wei, and Wei wishes you to attack Wu, each harboring the malevolent design of taking advantage of the quarrel. You would do well, my lord, to keep your armies at home. Put on mourning dress for Guan Yu, and wait till Wei and Wu are at war. That will be your time.”

The other officers supported Zhuge Liang, and Liu Bei listened. Presently, his grief spent itself, and he began to take food again. An edict was promulgated enjoining mourning dress upon all officials. The Prince went outside the south gate to summon the spirit home, and sacrificed and wailed a whole day for the dead warrior, his Brother.

In Luoyang, although Cao Cao had given honorable burial to the remains of Guan Yu, yet he was continually haunted by the dead man's spirit. Every night when he closed his eyes, he saw Guan Yu as he had known the warrior so well in the flesh. These visions made him nervous, and he sought the advice of his officers. Some suggested the building of new rooms for his own use.

“There is much witchcraft and malign influence in this old Palace at Luoyang. Build a new Palace for your own occupation,” said they.

“I would, and it should be called ‘The New Foundation,’” said he. “But where is the good architect?”

Jia Xu said, “There is one Su Yue, a very cunning artificer in Luoyang.”

Su Yue was called and set to work on the plans for a nine-hall pavilion for Cao Cao’s own use. It had verandahs and upper rooms as well. His plans pleased Cao Cao greatly.

“You have planned just such a place as I wished, only where will you find the main beam for such a building?”

“I know a certain tree that will serve,” said the architect. “About ten miles from the city, there is the Pool of the Leaping Dragon. Near it is a shrine, and beside that grows a fine pear tree. It is over a hundred spans high, and that will serve as the roof support.”

Cao Cao at once sent people to fell the tree. But after one whole day of labor, they came back to say they could make no impression on it, neither with saw nor ax. Cao Cao, doubting their word, went to see. When he had dismounted and stood by the tree, he could not but admire its size and proportions, as it rose above him tall, straight, and branched, till the wide-spreading and symmetrical top reached into the clouds. But he bade the men attack it again.

Then a few aged people of the village came and said, “The tree has stood here some centuries and is the haunt of a spirit. We think it should not be cut down.”

Cao Cao grew annoyed, saying, “I have gone to and fro in the world, now, some thirty years, and there is no one, from the Emperor to the commoner, who does not fear me. What spirit is there who dares oppose my wish?”

Drawing the sword he was wearing, Cao Cao went up to the tree and slashed at the trunk. The tree groaned as he struck, and blood stains spattered his dress. Terror-stricken, he threw down the sword, mounted his horse, and galloped off.

But that evening when he retired to rest, he could not sleep. He rose, went into the outer room, and sat there, leaning on a low table. Suddenly, a man appeared with his hair unbound, dressed in black and carrying a naked sword.

The visitor came straight toward Cao Cao, stopped in front of him and, pointing, cried out, "Behold the Spirit of the Pear Tree! You may desire to build your nine-hall pavilion, and you may contemplate rebellion. But when you began to attack my sacred tree, the number of your days was accomplished. I am come now to slay you."

"Where are the guards?" shouted Cao Cao in terror.

The figure struck at him with the sword. Cao Cao cried out and then awoke. His head was aching unbearably.

They sought the best physicians for him, but they failed to relieve the terrible pain. Sympathy for their lord was universal among Cao Cao's subordinates.

Hua Xin one day said to his master, "My lord, have you heard of Hua Tuo?"

"Do you mean him of Qiao who cured Zhou Tai?"

"Yes, that is he," replied Hua Xin.

"I have heard something of his fame, but I know nothing of his capabilities in his art."

"He is very clever; there are few so skillful. If one is ill and calls him in, he knows immediately whether to use drugs, or the needle, or the

cutlery, and the patient finds relief at once. Let one suffer from an internal complaint and drugs are ineffectual, with a dose of hashish he throws the patient into a state of perfect insensibility and then opens the abdomen and washes the affected organs with a medicament. The patient feels no pain. When the cleansing is complete, he sews up the wound with thread, dresses it, and in a month or less, the patient is well. This shows you how skillful he is.

“One day, Hua Tuo was traveling, when he heard a man by the wayside groaning with pain. ‘That is dyspepsia,’ said Hua Tuo. And further questions confirmed the diagnosis. He prescribed long draughts of the juice of garlic as an emetic, and the man vomited a worm. After this, the man was quite well.

“Chen Deng, the Governor of Guangling, suffered from a heavy feeling at the heart. His face was red and congested, and he had no appetite. Hua Tuo gave him a drug, and he threw up many internal wriggling parasites with red heads. The Governor asked what had caused the trouble, and Hua Tuo told him that he ate too much strong-smelling fish. He could cure Chen Deng this once, but in three years the disease would recur, and then nothing could save him. Three later, Chen Deng died.

“Another man had a tumor between the eyes, and it itched intolerably. Hua Tuo examined it and said there was a bird in it. The tumor was opened, and, surely enough, a canary flew out. The patient was relieved.

“A dog bit a man’s toe, and two tumorous growths ensued, one of which itched intolerably and the other pained severely. Hua Tuo said the painful one contained ten needles, and the other a couple of chess pips, black and white. He opened the two swellings, and the contents were as he had said. Really, he is of the same class of physician as masters Bian Que

and Zang Kong of old times. He lives at Jincheng—not far away—and could be here very soon.”

Cao Cao summoned him. As soon as he arrived, Hua Tuo felt the pulse and made careful examination.

“Prince, your headaches are due to a malignant membrane within the brain case. The membrane is too thick to get out. Swallowing drugs will do no good. But I propose to administer a dose of hashish, then open the brain case and remove the thickened membrane. That will be a radical cure.”

“You mean you want to kill me?” cried Cao Cao angrily.

“O Prince, you have heard how I cured Guan Yu of the poison that had gotten into his bones? I scraped them, and he did not hesitate a moment. Your malady is trifling; why do you mistrust me?”

“A painful arm may be scraped, but how can you cut open a man’s head? The fact is you have conspired with some of Guan Yu’s friends to take this opportunity to do away with me in revenge for his death.”

Cao Cao told his lictors to hale Hua Tuo to jail, and there he was tortured to try to find who were his accomplices.

Jia Xu pleaded for him, saying, “The man possesses rare skills. To kill him is to waste his talents.”

But the intervention was of no avail.

“The man wants to get a chance to kill me. He is the same sort of scoundrel as Ji Ping.”

The wretched physician was subjected to worse sufferings.

His jailer was a certain Wu, nicknamed “The Jailer” by nearly everybody. He was kindly disposed to Hua Tuo and saw that Hua Tuo was well fed.

Hua Tuo conceived a liking for his jailer and said to him one day, “I am doomed, I know. The pity is that my Black Bag treatise on medicine may be lost. You have been most kind to me, and as I have no other way of recompensing you, I will give you a letter to my wife telling her to send the Black Bag, and I will give it to you that you may carry on my art.”

Wu the Jailer rejoiced greatly, saying, “If I have that book, I will throw away the menial position of jailer, travel about the country healing sick folks, and spread your virtue.”

The letter was written and given to Wu the Jailer, who lost no time in traveling to Jincheng to meet with Hua Tuo’s wife, and she gave him the Black Bag to bring back to Hua Tuo. After Hua Tuo had read through the book carefully, he presented it to Wu the Jailer, who took it home and hid it away.

Ten days after this, Hua Tuo died in prison. Wu the Jailer bought a coffin and had him buried. This done, he quitted the prison and went home. But when he asked for the book, he found that his wife had discovered it and was using it to light the fire. He snatched away what was left of it, but a whole volume was missing, and what was left amounted only to several pages. He vented his anger in cursing his wife.

But she retorted, saying, “If you become such a learned person as Hua Tuo, you will only die in prison like him. What good did it all do him?”

It struck Wu the Jailer that there was something in what she said, and he ceased grumbling at her. But the upshot of all this was that the learning in the *Treatise of the Black Bag* was finally lost to the world, for what was left only contained the recipes relating to domestic animals.



Hua Tuo was the ablest of physicians,
Seeing what diseases were lurking within beings.
Alas! that he died, and his writings
Followed him to the Nine Golden Springs.

Meanwhile, Cao Cao became worse, the uncertainty of the intentions of his rivals aggravating his disease more than a little. Then they said an envoy had come with letter from Wu, and it ran like this:

“Thy servant, Sun Quan, has long seen that destiny indicates Your Highness as master of all, and looks forward with confidence to your early accession to the dignity of the Son of Heaven. If you will send your armies to destroy Liu Bei and sweep rebellion from the two River Lands, thy servant, at the head of his armies, will submit and accept his land as a fief.”

Cao Cao laughed as he read this, and he said to his officers, “Is this youth trying to put me on a furnace?”

But Minister Chen Qun and the attendants seriously replied, “O Prince, the Hans have been feeble too long, while your virtues and merits are like the mountains. All the people look to you, and when Sun Quan acknowledged himself as your minister, he is but responsive to the will of Heaven and the desire of humans. It is wrong that you oppose when such contrary influences work to a common end, and you must soon ascend to the high place.”

Cao Cao smiled. “I have served the Hans for many years. Even if I have acquired some merit, I have been rewarded with a principedom and high

rank. I dare not aspire to greater things. If the finger of heaven points to me, then shall I be as King Wen of Zhou.”

“As Sun Quan acknowledges himself your servant and promises obedience, you, my lord, can confer a title upon him and assign to him the duty of attacking Liu Bei,” said Sima Yi.

Approving of the suggestion, Cao Cao gave Sun Quan the titles of General of the Flying Cavalry and Lord of Nanzhang, and appointed him to the Imperial Protectorship of Jingzhou. Forthwith, this command was sent away to Sun Quan.

Cao Cao’s condition grew worse daily. One night, he had a dream of three horses feeding out of the same manger.

Next day, he told it to Jia Xu, saying, “I saw three horses feeding on the same manger before the family of Ma Teng was harmed. Last night, I saw the same dream again. How do you interpret it?”

“The horses were feeding on bounty. This is auspicious to dream of dignity,” replied Jia Xu. “And naturally such an honor comes to the Caos. I do not think you need feel any misgivings.”

Cao Cao was comforted.



Cao Cao dreamed three steeds together fed,
The vision seers could not explain,
None guessed how soon, when Cao Cao was dead,
One dynasty would rule again.

Ah, yes, Cao Cao had vainly wrought;
Of none avail each wicked wile,
For, later, in Wei court, there fought
Against him one with equal guile.



That night, Cao Cao became worse. As he lay on his couch, he felt dizzy and could not see, so he rose and sat by a table, upon which he leaned. It seemed to him that someone shrieked, and, peering into the darkness, he perceived the forms of many of his victims—the Empress Fu, the Consort Dong, Fu Wan, Dong Cheng, and more than twenty other officials—and all were bloodstained. They stood in the obscurity and whispered, demanding his life. He rose, lifted his sword and threw it wildly into the air. Just then, there was a loud crash, and the southwest corner of the new building came down. And Cao Cao fell with it. His attendants raised him and bore him to another palace, where he might lie at peace.

But he found no peace. The next night was disturbed by the ceaseless wailing of men and women's voices.

When day dawned, Cao Cao sent for his officers, and said to them, "Thirty years have I spent in the turmoil of war and have always refused belief in the supernatural. But what does all this mean?"

"O Prince, you should summon the Daoists to offer sacrifices and prayers," said they.

Cao Cao sighed, saying, "The Wise Teacher said, 'He who offends against heaven has no one to pray to.' I feel that my fate is accomplished, my days have run, and there is no help."

But he would not consent to call in the priests. Next day, his symptoms were worse. He was panting and could no longer see distinctly. He sent hastily for Xiahou Dun, who came at once. But as Xiahou Dun drew near the doors, he, too, saw the shadowy forms of the slain Empress and her children and many other victims of Cao Cao's cruelty. He was overcome with fear and fell to the ground. The servants raised him and led him away, very ill.

Then Cao Cao called in four of his trusty advisers—Cao Hong, Chen Qun, Jia Xu, and Sima Yi—that they might hear his last wishes.

Cao Hong, speaking for the four, said, "Take good care of your precious self, O Prince, that you may quickly recover."

But Cao Cao said, "Thirty and more years have I gone up and down, and many bold leaders have fallen before me. The only ones that remain are Sun Quan in the south and Liu Bei in the west. I have not yet slain them. Now I am very ill, and I shall never again stand before you, wherefore my family affairs must be settled.

"My firstborn—Cao Ang, son of Lady Liu—fell in battle at Wancheng, when he was young. The Lady Bian bore four sons to me, as you know. The third, Cao Zhi, was my favorite, but he was vain and unreliable, fond of wine and lax in morals; therefore he is not my heir. My second son, Cao Zhang, is valiant, but imprudent. The fourth, Cao Xiong, is a weakling and may not live long. My eldest, Cao Pi, is steady and serious; he is fit to succeed me, and I look to you to support him."

Cao Hong and the others wept as they heard these words, and they left the chamber. Then Cao Cao bade his servants bring all of the rare incenses and fragrances that he burned every day, and he handed out to his handmaids.

And he said to them, “After my death, you must diligently attend to your womanly labors. You can make silken shoes for sale, and so earn your own living.” He also bade them go on living in the Bronze Bird Tower and celebrate a daily sacrifice for him, with music by the singing women, and presentation of the eatables laid before his tablet.

Next, he commanded that seventy-two sites for a tomb should be selected near Jiangwu, and that no one should know his actual burial place, lest his remains should be dug up.

And when these final orders had been given, he sighed a few times, shed some tears, and died. He was sixty-six, and passed away in the first month of the twenty-fifth year of Rebuilt Tranquility (AD 220).



A certain poet composed “A Song of Yejun” expressing sympathy for Cao Cao, which is given here:

I stood in Yejun and saw the River Zhang
Go gliding by. I thought no common person
Ever rose from such a place. Or he was great
In war, a poet, or an artist skilled.
Perchance a model minister, or son,
Or famous for fraternal duty shown.
The thoughts of heroes are not ours to judge,
Nor are their actions for our eyes to see.
A man may stand the first in merit, then
His crimes may brand him chief of criminals.
And so his reputation’s fair and foul;
His literary gifts may bear the mark

Of genius; he may be a ruler born;
But this is certain: he will stand above
His fellows, herding not with common people.
Takes he the field, then is he bold in fight;
Would he a mansion build, a palace springs.
In all things great, his genius masters him.
And such was Cao Cao. He could never be
Obedient; he a rebel was, foredoomed.
He seized and ruled, but hungered for more power;
Became a prince, and still was not content.
And yet this man of glorious career
When gripped by sickness, wept as might a child.
Full well he knew, when on the bed of death,
That all is vanity and nothing worth.
His latest acts were kindly. Simple gifts
Of fragrant incense gave he to the maids.
Ah! The ancients' splendid deeds or secret thoughts
We may not measure with our puny rule.
But criticize them, pedants, as ye may
The mighty dead will smile at what you say.

As Cao Cao breathed his last, the whole of those present raised a great wailing and lamentation. The news was sent to the members of the family, the Heir Cao Pi, Lord of Yanling Cao Zhang, Lord of Linzi Cao Zhi, and Lord of Xiaohuai Cao Xiong. They wrapped the body in its shroud, enclosed it in a silver shell, and laid it in a golden coffin, which was sent at once home to Yejun.

The eldest son wept aloud at the tidings and went out with all his following to meet the procession and escort the body of his father into his home. The coffin was laid in a great hall beside the main building, and all the officials in deep mourning wailed in the hall.

Suddenly, one stood out from the ranks of the mourners and said, "I would request the heir to cease lamentation for the dead and devote himself to the present needs of state."

It was Sima Fu, and he continued, "The death of the Prince will cause an upheaval in the empire, and it is essential that the heir should assume his dignity without loss of time. There is not mourning alone to be seen to."

The others replied, "The succession is settled, but the investiture can hardly proceed without the necessary edict from the Emperor. That must be secured."

Said Chen Jiao, who was Minister of War, "As the Prince died away from home, it may be that disputes will ensue, and the country will be in danger." Then Chen Jiao slashed off the sleeves of his robe with a sword and shouted fiercely, "We will invest the prince forthwith, and anyone who does not agree, let him be treated as this robe."

Still, fear held most of the assembly. Then arrived Hua Xin with great haste from the capital. They wondered what his sudden arrival meant.

Soon, he entered the hall and said, "The Prince of Wei is dead, and the world is in commotion. Why do you not invest his successor quickly?"

"We await the command," cried they in chorus, "and also the order of Princess-Mother Bian concerning the heirship."

"I have procured the imperial edict here," cried he, pulling it out from his breast.

They all jumped up and down to shout their congratulations. And Hua Xin read the edict.

Hua Xin had always been devoted to Wei. As soon as he knew of Cao Cao's death, he had drafted this edict and gotten it sealed by Emperor Xian almost by force. Nevertheless, there it was: therein, Cao Pi was named as Prince of Wei, First Minister, and Imperial Protector of Jizhou.

Cao Pi, thereupon, took his seat in the princely place and received the exultant congratulations of all the officers. This was followed by a great banquet.

However, all was not to pass too smoothly. While the banquet was in progress, the news came: "Cao Zhang, Lord of Yanling, with an army of one hundred thousand troops, is approaching from Changan."

In a state of consternation, the new Prince turned to his courtiers, saying, "What shall I do? This young, golden-bearded brother of mine, always obstinate and determined and with no little military skill, is marching hither with an army to contest my inheritance."

"Let me go to see the Marquis. I can make him desist," said one of the guests.

The others cried, "Only yourself, O Exalted One, can save us in this peril!"

Quarrel between two sons of Cao Cao
Just as in the House of Yuan Shao.

If you would know who proposed himself as envoy, read the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XIX

CHAPTER 79

BROTHER OPPRESSING BROTHER: CAO ZHI COMPOSES POEMS; NEPHEW
HARMING UNCLE: LIU FENG RECEIVES PUNISHMENT.

All eyes turned toward the speaker, High Minister Jia Kui, and the young prince commanded him to undertake the mission. So he went out of the city and sought to speak with Cao Zhang.

Cao Zhang came quickly to the point. "Who has the late Prince's seal?" asked he.

Jia Kui replied seriously, "There is an eldest son to a house, and an heir-apparent to a state. Such a question from your lordship is unbecoming."

Cao Zhang held his peace, and the two proceeded into the city to the gates of the Palace. There, Jia Kui suddenly asked him, "You come as a mourner or as a rival claimant?"

"I am come as a mourner. I never had any ulterior motive."

"That being so. Why bring in your soldiers?"

Whereupon, Cao Zhang ordered his escort to retire, and entered the city alone. When the Cao brothers met, they fell into each other's arms and wept. Then Cao Zhang yielded command of all his army, and he was directed to go back to Yanling and guard it. He obediently withdrew.

Cao Pi, being now firmly established, changed the name of the period of his rule to the Prolonged Wealth Era, the First Year (AD 220). He made Jia Xu Grand Commander, Hua Xin Prime Minister, and Wang Lang High Minister, and made many promotions. To the late Prince, he gave the posthumous title of the King of Great Might, and buried him in Gaoling.

To the superintendence of the building of King Cao's tomb, Cao Pi nominated Yu Jin, but with malicious intent. For when Yu Jin reached his post, he found the walls of the rooms decorated with chalk sketches depicting the drowning of the seven armies and the capture of himself by Guan Yu. Guan Yu was looking very dignified and severe. Pang De was refusing to bow to the victor, while Yu Jin himself was lying in the dust pleading for his life.

Cao Pi had chosen this method of putting Yu Jin to open shame because Yu Jin had not preferred death to the dishonor of capture, and had sent an artist on purpose to depict the shameful scenes. When Yu Jin saw them, shame and rage alternately took possession of him till he fell ill. Soon after, he died.



War waged he for many a year,
Yet fell prey to craven fear.
None can know another's heart,
Drawing tigers, with bones start.



Soon after the accession, Hua Xin petitioned the Prince of Wei, saying, "The Lord of Yanling has cut himself loose from his army and gone quietly

to his post, but your other two brothers did not attend the funeral of their father. Their conduct should be inquired into and punished.”

Cao Pi took up the suggestion and sent commissioners to each.

They who were sent to the younger quickly returned to report: “Cao Xiong, the Lord of Xiaohuai, had hanged himself rather than suffer for his fault.”

Cao Pi ordered honorable burial for Cao Xiong and gave him the posthumous title of Prince of Xiaohuai.

Soon after, the envoy to Linzi returned to report: “The Lord of Linzi, Cao Zhi, is spending his time in dissipation, his especial boon companions being two brothers named Ding Yi and Ding Yin. They were very rude. When we presented ourselves, Cao Zhi sat bolt-upright but would not say a word. Ding Yi used insulting words, saying, ‘King Cao intended our lord to succeed, but was turned therefrom by the slanderous tongues of certain among you. As soon as he is dead, your master begins to think of punishment for his own flesh and blood.’

“The other brother, Ding Yin, said, ‘In intellect our lord leads the age, and he ought to have been heir to his father. Now, not only does he not succeed, but he is treated in this harsh way by a lot of courtiers of your sort, ignorant of what genius means.’

“And then Cao Zhi, in a fit of anger, had ordered his lictors to beat the chief envoy and turn him out.”

This treatment of his messenger annoyed Cao Pi greatly, and he dispatched a force of three thousand Imperial Tiger Guards under Xu Chu to arrest his brother and all his immediate surroundings. When Xu Chu arrived at Linzi, the Gate Commander stopped him. Xu Chu slew that general and entered the city, unchallenged. He went to the residence and

found Cao Zhi and all his companions dead-drunk. So he bound them, put them into carts, and sent them to court in Yejun. He also arrested all the officers of the palace.

Cao Pi's first order was to put to death Ding Yi and Ding Yin. The two brothers were not wholly base; they had a reputation for learning, and many were sorry for them.

Cao Pi's mother, Lady Bian, was alarmed at the severity of the new rule, and the suicide of her youngest son wounded her deeply. When she heard that Cao Zhi had been arrested and his comrades put to death, she left her palace and went to see her eldest son. As soon as he saw her, the Prince hastened to meet her. She began to weep.

"Your brother has always had that weakness for wine, but we let him go his way out of consideration for his undoubted ability. I hope you will not forget he is your brother and that I bore you both. Spare his life that I may close my eyes in peace when I set out for the deep springs."

"I also admire his ability, Mother, and have no intention to hurt him. But I would reform him. Have no anxiety as to his fate," said Cao Pi.

So the mother was comforted and withdrew. The Prince then went to a private room and bade them call his brother.

Said Hua Xin, "Surely the Princess-Mother has just been interceding for your brother. Is it not so?"

"It is so," replied the Prince.

"Then let me say that Cao Zhi is too clever to be content to remain in a humble station. If you do not remove him, he will do you harm."

“I must obey my mother’s command.”

“People say your brother simply talks in literature. I do not believe it myself, but he might be put to the test. If he bears a false reputation, you can slay him; if what they say is true, then degrade him, lest the scholars of the land should babble.”

Soon, Cao Zhi came, and in a state of great trepidation bowed low before his elder brother, confessing his fault.

The Prince addressed him, saying, “Though we are brothers, the proper relation between us of prince and minister must not be overlooked. Why, then, did you behave indecorously? While the late Prince lived, you made a boast of your literary powers, but I am disposed to think you may have made use of another’s pen. Now I require you to compose a poem within the time taken to walk seven paces, and I will spare your life if you succeed. If you fail, then I shall punish you with rigor.”

“Will you suggest a theme?” asked Cao Zhi.

Now there was, hanging in the hall, a black-and-white sketch of two bulls that had been fighting at the foot of a wall, and one of them had just fallen dead into a well. Cao Pi pointed to the sketch and said, “Take that as the subject. But you are forbidden to use the words ‘two bulls,’ ‘one bull,’ ‘fighting,’ ‘wall’s foot,’ ‘falling,’ ‘well,’ and ‘dead.’”

Cao Zhi took seven paces and then recited this poem:

“Two butcher’s victims lowing walked along,
Each head bore curving bones, a sturdy pair,
They met just by a hillock, both were strong,
Each would avoid a pit newly dug there.
They fought unequal battle, for at length
One lay below a gory mass, inert.

It was not that they were of unequal strength
Though wrathful both, one did not strength exert.”

This exhibition of skill amazed the Prince and the whole court. Cao Pi thought he would use another test, so he bade his brother improvise on the theme of their fraternal relationship, the words “brotherhood” or “brother” being barred.

Without seeming to reflect, Cao Zhi rattled off this rhyme:

“They were boiling beans on a beanstalk fire;
Came a plaintive voice from the pot,
‘O why, since we sprang from the selfsame root,
Should you kill me with anger hot?’”

The allusion in these verses to the cruel treatment of one member of a family by another was not lost upon Cao Pi, and he dropped a few silent tears.

The mother of both men came out at this moment from her abiding place and said, “Should the elder brother thus oppress the younger?”

The Prince jumped from his seat, saying, “My mother, the laws of the state cannot be nullified.”

Cao Zhi was degraded to the rank of Lord of Anxiang. He accepted the decision without a murmur and at once left his brother’s court by horse.

Cao Pi’s accession was the signal for a set of new laws and new commands. His behavior toward Emperor Xian was more intemperate than his father’s had ever been.

The stories of his harshness reached Chengdu and almost frightened Liu Bei, who summoned his counselors to discuss what he should do.

Said he, “Since the death of Cao Cao and the accession of his son, the position of the Emperor has changed for the worse. Sun Quan acknowledges the lordship of Wei, and its influence is becoming too great. I am disposed to destroy Sun Quan in revenge for the death of my Brother. That done, I will proceed to the Capital District and purge the whole land of rebellion. What think you?”

Then Liao Hua stood out from the ranks of officers and threw himself upon the earth, saying with tears, “Liu Feng and Meng Da were the true cause of the death of your Brother and his adopted son. Both these renegades deserve death.”

Liu Bei was of the same opinion and was going to send and arrest them forthwith, but here Zhuge Liang intervened and gave wiser advice.

“That is not the way. Go slowly, or you may stir up strife. Promote these two and separate them. After that, you may arrest.”

The Prince of Hanzhong saw the prudence of this procedure and stayed his hand. He raised Liu Feng to the Governorship of Mianzhu, and so separated the two delinquents.

Now Peng Yang and Meng Da were old friends. Hearing what was afoot, the former hastened home and wrote warning his friend. The letter was confided to a trusty messenger to bear to Meng Da. The messenger was caught as he went out of the city and carried before Ma Chao, who thus got wind of the business. He then went to Peng Yang’s house, where, nothing

being suspected, he was received kindly and wine was brought in. The two drank for some time.

When Ma Chao thought his host sufficiently off his guard, he said, "The Prince of Hanzhong used to look on you with great favor. Why does he do so no longer?"

The host began to rave against his master. "The obstinate old leather-belly! I will find some way to pay him out."

In order to see to what lengths he would go, Ma Chao led him on, saying, "Truth to tell: I have long hated the man, too."

"Then you join Meng Da and attack, while I win over the people of East and West River Lands. That will make it easy enough," said Peng Yang.

"What you propose is very feasible, but we will talk it over again tomorrow," said Ma Chao, and took leave.

Taking with him the captured man and the letter he carried, Ma Chao then proceeded to see the Prince, to whom he related the whole story. Liu Bei was very angry and at once had the intended traitor arrested and put in prison, where he was examined under torture to get at full details.

While Peng Yang lay in prison, bitterly but vainly repentant, Liu Bei consulted his adviser. "That fellow Peng Yang meant to turn traitor. What shall I do with him?"

"The fellow is something of a scholar, but irresponsible," replied Zhuge Liang. "He is too dangerous to be left alive." Thereupon, orders were given that he should be allowed to commit suicide in jail.

The news that Peng Yang had been made away frightened his sympathizer and friend, Meng Da, and put him in a quandary. Further, Liu Feng's promotion and transfer to Mianzhu arrived, and it frightened him

still more. So he sought advice from two friends and commanders, the brothers Shen Dan and Shen Yi, who lived in Shangyong.

“My friend Peng Yang and I did much for the Prince of Hanzhong. But now Peng Yang is dead, and I am forgotten. More than that, the Prince wishes to put me to death. What can I do?” said Meng Da.

Shen Dan replied, “I think I can find a plan that will secure your safety.”

“What is it?” asked Meng Da, feeling happier.

“Desertion. My brother Shen Yi and I have long desired to go over to Wei. You just write the Prince of Hanzhong a memorial resigning your service and betake yourself to the Prince of Wei, who will certainly employ you in some honorable way. Then we two will follow.”

Meng Da saw that this was his best course, so he wrote a memorandum, which he gave to the messenger who had brought the recent dispatches to take back with him. That night, Meng Da left his post and went to Wei.

The messenger returned to Chengdu, handed in Meng Da’s memorial, and told the story of his desertion. The Prince was angry. He tore open the letter and read:

“In the humble opinion of thy servant, O Prince, you have set out to accomplish a task comparable with that of Yi Yin, and to walk in the meritorious footsteps of Lu Wang in building the fame of Dukes Wen and Huan. When the great design was rough-hewn, you had the support of the lands of the states of Wu and Chu, wherefore many people of ability incontinently joined you. Since I entered your service, I have committed many faults; if I recognize them, how much more do you see them! Now, O Prince, you are surrounded by famous people,

while I, useless as a helper at home and inept as a leader abroad, should be shamed were I to take a place among them.

“It is well-known that when Fan Li saw certain eventualities, he went sailing on the lakes, and Zi Fan acknowledged his faults and stayed by the rivers. Inasmuch as one cannot take means of safeguarding one’s self at the critical and dangerous moment, I desire—as is my duty—to go away as I came, untainted. Moreover, I am stupid and without use or merit, merely born in these days as the sport of circumstances.

“In the days of old, Shen Sheng, though perfectly filial, incurred the suspicions of his father and died; Wu Zixu, though perfectly loyal, was put to death; Meng Tian, though he extended the borders of Qin, suffered the extreme penalty; and Yue Yi, though he destroyed the might of Qi, was the victim of calumny. Whenever I have read of these men, I have been moved to tears, and now I am in like case and the more mortified.

“Lately, Jingzhou was overwhelmed, and I, an officer of rank, failed in my duty, not one in a hundred behaving as I should. I can only return Fangling and Shangyong and seek service abroad. Now I desire you, O Prince, graciously to understand, to sympathize with thy servant, and to condone the step he is about to take. Really, I am but a mean man, incapable of great deeds. I know what I am doing, and I dare to say it is no small fault.

“They say that dissolution of bonds should not occasion recrimination, and the dismissed servant should take leave without

heart-burning. I have taken your orders many times, and now, O Prince, you must act yourself. I write this with extreme trepidation.”

But the reading gave rise to great anger in the breast of the Prince. “The unmerited fellow!” said he. “He turns traitor and dares to insult me by sending a letter of farewell.”

Liu Bei was just giving orders to send a force to seize the deserter, when Zhuge Liang interposed, saying, “You had better send Liu Feng to capture him and let the two tigers worry each other to weakness. Whether Liu Feng succeeds or fails, he will have to come to the capital, and you can kill him. Thus will you cut off two evils.”

Liu Bei took his advice. Orders were sent to Mianzhu, and Liu Feng obediently led out his troops.

Now Meng Da arrived when Cao Pi was holding a great council. When the attendants told him that General Meng Da of Shu had come, Cao Pi summoned him to enter.

Said Cao Pi to him, “Is this a sincere surrender?”

Meng Da replied, “I was in fear of death for not having relieved Guan Yu. That is my only reason for coming.”

However, Cao Pi did not trust him. Then they reported that Liu Feng was coming to arrest him, with a large army, and had attacked Xiangyang and was challenging Meng Da to battle.

Cao Pi said, “You seem to be true. Go then to Xiangyang and take Liu Feng. If you bring me his head, I shall no longer doubt.”

Meng Da replied, "I will convince him by argument. No soldiers will be needed. I will bring him to surrender, too."

So Meng Da was made General Who Establishes Strong Arms, Lord of Pingyang, and Governor of Xincheng, and sent to guard Xiangyang and Fancheng.

Now there were two generals there already, Xiahou Shang and Xu Huang, who engaged in reducing the surrounding territories. Meng Da arrived, met his two colleagues, and was told that Liu Feng was fifteen miles from the city. Whereupon, Meng Da wrote him a letter urging him to surrender. But Liu Feng was in no mood to surrender. Instead he tore up the letter and put the messenger to death.

"The renegade has already made me offend against my duty to my uncle and, now, would sever me from my father so that I shall be reproached as disloyal and unfilial," said Liu Feng.

Meng Da went out with his army to give battle. Liu Feng rode to the front, pointed with his sword at his opponent, and railed against him.

"Death is very near you!" replied Meng Da. "Yet you continue obstinately in the way of foolishness and will not understand."

Liu Feng rode out, flourishing his sword. He engaged Meng Da, who ran away before the conflict had well begun. Liu Feng pursued hotly to seven miles. Then he fell into an ambush and found himself attacked on two sides by Xiahou Shang and Xu Huang. Meng Da also returned to the attack. Liu Feng was forced to flee. He made straight for Shangyong, pursued all the way. When he reached the city and hailed the gate, he was met by a volley of arrows.

"I have surrendered to Wei!" cried Shen Dan from the city tower.

Liu Feng grew furious and prepared to attack the wall, but the army of Wei was close behind, and, having no resting place, he set off for Fangling. He arrived there to find the banners of Wei set out along the walls. Then he saw Shen Yi wave a signal from the tower, and at once, there appeared from the shelter of the wall a body of soldiers, and the leading banner displayed 'General of the Right Army Xu Huang.'

Liu Feng was worsted by the ambush. Then he made for home. But he was pursued, and only a hundred riders of his remained to him when he regained Chengdu.

Seeking an interview with his father, he found but scant sympathy.

In response to his petition, made prostrate, and weeping, Liu Bei said, "Shameful son! How are you come to see me at all?"

"My uncle's mishap was not due to my refusal of help, but because Meng Da thwarted me."

"You eat as a man, you dress as a man, but you have no more the instincts of a man than an image of clay or wood. What mean you by saying another wretch thwarted you?"

Liu Bei bade the executioners expel Liu Feng and put him to death. But the Prince felt some compunction later when he heard of Liu Feng's treatment to the messenger who had brought Meng Da's letter inviting him to become a traitor. And he gave way to grief for the death of Guan Yu until he fell ill. So no military movements were made.

After he had succeeded to the principdom, Cao Pi raised all his officers to high rank and had an army prepared of three hundred thousand and maneuvered them over the southern territories and made great feasts in the

county of Qiao in the old state of Pei, which was the land of his ancestors. As the grand army passed by, the aged villagers lined the roads offering gifts of wine, just as when the Founder of the Hans returned home to Pei.

When it was announced that the Regent Marshal Xiahou Dun was near death, Cao Pi hastened back to Yejun, but arrived too late to see him. He put on mourning for the great leader and instituted magnificent funeral ceremonies.

In the eighth month of that same year (AD 220), it was reported that a phoenix had been seen to bow at Shiyi, and a jilin had appeared at Linzi, while a yellow dragon was observed in Yejun.

Whereupon Imperial Commander Li Qu and Minister Xu Zhi discussed these appearances, and putting them all together they concluded, "Those splendid signs presage that Wei is about to supplant Han, and the altar of abdication should be set up."

Presently, a deputation of forty high officers, both military and civil, led by Hua Xin, Wang Lang, Xin Pi, Jia Xu, Liu Ye, Liu Zi, Chen Jiao, Chen Qun, and Huan Jie went into the Forbidden City and proposed to Emperor Xian that he should abdicate and yield to the Prince of Wei, Cao Pi.

It is time to set up the Throne of Wei,
And steal the land from the Hans.

The next chapter will record the Emperor's reply.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XIX

CHAPTER 80

CAO PI DEPOSES THE EMPEROR, TAKING AWAY THE FORTUNES OF HAN;
LIU BEI ASSUMES THE THRONE, CONTINUING THE HERITAGE.

Hua Xin was the spokesman of the deputation of officers that went into the Forbidden City, and he spoke thus: "Since the inauguration of the Prince of Wei, virtue has spread to the four corners of the empire and humanity has permeated all the earth to a degree unexcelled in all the ages, even in the days of the ancient rulers, King Tang and King Yu. We, your servants, have taken account of these things and have reached the conclusion that the fortunes of Han are worn out, wherefore we trust Your Majesty, in imitation of the great prototypes King Yao and King Shun, will yield the mountains, the rivers, and the peoples to a more able guardian and high priest of the sacrifices in the person of the Prince of Wei, thereby pleasing Heaven and satisfying the hearts of persons, and enabling Your Majesty to enjoy the happiness of freedom and repose from the exacting duties of the chief ruler. The happiness of your ancestors and of humanity at large would thereby be enhanced. Having thoroughly debated this matter, we have come to lay it before you."

The Emperor listened in amazement, and for a time could not reply. Then, looking at the assembly, he said sadly, "How can I abandon my empire for the sake of repose—the empire won by my Great Ancestor, its Founder, when, with a three-span sword, he slew the Snake and restored Right, and consolidated when he reduced Qin and overwhelmed Chu—the empire which has been handed down for four centuries? Though I possess

not brilliant talents, yet I have done no wrong. Go back and debate this again in a just and moderate spirit.”

Then Hua Xin led forward Xu Zhi and Li Qu nearer the throne, saying, “If Your Majesty thinks we may be mistaken, pray ask these two, who will explain.”

Said Li Qu, “Since the Prince of Wei has taken his seat, the Jilin has descended, the Phoenix has appeared, the Yellow Dragon has come forth, the Grain of Felicity has flourished, and Sweet Dew has watered the earth. All these things augur that Heaven decrees a change, and Wei must replace Han.”

Xu Zhi continued, “The astrologers, watching the aspect of the skies at night, have seen the blazing light of the star of Han gradually fade away and Your Majesty’s own star become dim. On the other hand, the aspect of the sky and the attitude of the earth have been wholly bright in favor of Wei to a degree hard to state in words. Moreover, the lots have been cast, and they gave the words ‘Devil, at the side, has been sent; there must be an inroad upon Han without word’; another lot, ‘Word, in east, light moves west, two suns radiating as the air blows south.’ These oracles gave two words which, joined, compose ‘Xu’; ‘two suns, one on the other’, which is ‘Chang.’ These signs are unmistakeable, for when put together the whole reads, ‘Wei at Xuchang is to receive the abdication of Han.’ If you consider, Your Majesty must admit this.”

“All empty words and madness, this talk of auguries and lots! Is it reasonable that I should suddenly abandon the great heritage for such nonsense?”

Then Wang Lang said, “Wax and wane has been the law of all things from the beginning; every period of glory is followed by one of obscurity. Has any rule endured forever or any House never failed? The rule of Han,

handed down through four centuries to Yourself, has lost its vigor, and the time has come to yield. Retirement may not be delayed, or confusion will ensue.”

The Emperor wept aloud and retired to his private chamber, while the officers left the hall laughing.

Next morning, they assembled in the court, but the Emperor did not appear. So they sent the Palace officers to request his presence. Still, he feared to show himself.

Empress Cao asked him, “Why does Your Majesty not hold the court as usual, especially when you are requested to go out?”

“Because your brother wishes to depose me and become Emperor himself. He has set the whole host of officers against me to force me to abdicate, and I will not expose myself to this compulsion.”

“But what can have induced my brother to do such a dreadfully rebellious thing?” said she angrily.

Just as she spoke, Cao Hong and Cao Xiu, both armed, forced their way into the inner apartments and requested His Majesty to come to the Hall of Audience.

The Empress broke out into abuse: “So you are two of the disorderly rebels who, for the sake of your own ends, have conspired to upset all the good service of my father. Though he overshadowed the whole land, he never dared to aspire to the sacred throne. But my brother, who has only just succeeded him, sets no bounds to his ambition and temerity and would usurp the Throne. Heaven will surely cut off his offspring!”

She wept bitterly as she went away, and the attendants sobbed and wept, too. But Cao Xiu and Cao Hong still urged the Emperor to go to the

Hall of Audience, and at last, he had to yield. There, Hua Xin took up the question again.

“Your Majesty should act as was advised yesterday and so avoid any misfortune.”

The Emperor sobbed, “All of you have eaten of the bounty of Han for years, and among you are many whose fathers and grandfathers were conspicuous for merit. How can you bring yourselves to act thus improperly toward me?”

“If Your Majesty refuses to follow advice, I fear that there will soon be trouble in the family. Really, we are not disloyal.”

“Who would dare to murder me?” cried the Emperor.

“Everyone knows that Your Majesty lacks the happy attributes of a successful ruler and that is why there is so much confusion in the country. If it were not for the presence of the Prince of Wei in your court, many people would murder you. Your Majesty has never yet learned how to treat people; is your sole desire to set people against you?”

The Emperor, alarmed at the violence of his language, shook out his sleeves and rose to go away. Then Wang Lang glanced at Hua Xin, who rushed forward and seized the Emperor by the sleeve.

“Is it consent or not?” cried he angrily. “One word!”

The Emperor was dumb with terror.

“Where is the Keeper of the Seal?” shouted Cao Hong and Cao Xiu, drawing their swords.

“The Keeper of the Seal is here,” said Zu Bi, stepping calmly to the front. They tried to force the seal from him, but he cried, “The Seal belongs to the Emperor, and I will not yield it!”

Cao Hong called up the executioners and told them to behead him, which they did. Zu Bi abused the ruffians to the last breath.



Dethroned by wicked traitors was the ruling House of
Han,

They falsely claimed as precedent the deeds of Yu and
Tang.

The crowd of officers at court were all on Cao Pi's
side,

Save one, Zu Bi the Keeper of the Seal, and loyally he
died.



The Emperor was in a state of abject terror, and when he saw the whole court filling up with armed guards, all soldiers of Wei and so enemies, he burst into tears.

“Yes. I will give up the throne to the Prince, if haply I may be spared to live out the few years Heaven has assigned me,” wailed he.

“The Prince will always take care of Your Majesty,” said Jia Xu. “It would be as well to prepare the abdication manifesto quickly so as to preserve tranquility.”

Such a hint could not be missed, and Chen Qun was directed to draft the document. As soon as it was finished, Hua Xin and a host of officers, took it off to the Prince of Wei's palace and presented it, with the Imperial Hereditary Seal, in the name of the Emperor. Very joyfully, Cao Pi read this writing:

“During the whole of my thirty-two years of reign, the land has been in a state of turmoil, but the spirits of my ancestors have preserved me in the midst of danger. Now, from the signs of the heavens and the hearts of the people, I see that the virtue of the Hans is exhausted and good fortune has devolved upon the House of Wei, as may be seen from the success in war enjoyed by the late King Cao and the resplendent virtue of the present Prince, which answers to the times.

“By all noble principles the empire is no private possession, but a public trust. Wherefore the great King Yao, to his eternal glory, passed over his own son. How I admire this deed! Now in imitation thereof I have resolved to abdicate in favor of my Chief Minister, the Prince of Wei, who will not, I hope, disappoint my wishes.”

Cao Pi heard this and was going to accept it as final.

But Sima Yi said no: “Although the declaration and the seal have been sent, yet decorum demands refusal at first so as to silence people’s criticism.”

Then Wang Lang drafted a memorial modestly declining the proposal of succession on the ground of unfitness and asking that some other be sought. When this reached the Emperor, he was much perturbed and asked what was to be done next.

Replied Hua Xin, “When his father was offered a principedom, he declined thrice, but he finally accepted. Wherefore Your Majesty should renew the offer. The Prince will end with acceptance.”

There was no help for it, and so Huan Jie was bidden to draft another declaration of offer, which was sent by the hand of the Officer of the

Dynastic Temple, Zhang Yin, together with the emblems and the seal.

This new declaration read thus:

“To the Prince of Wei: you have sent your modest refusal of my offer to abdicate. But I have long since seen that the virtue of Han is passing, and I could only rely upon the late Prince, your father, who virtuously undertook the great task of removing the evil oppressors and purging the land. Now his son Cao Pi has succeeded. His perfect virtue is resplendent, his fame universal, and his benevolence is wafted to all parts. The divine choice rests upon him.

“In the days of old, Yao the Great would abdicate, and did so in favor of Shun, who possessed merit after his twenty accomplishments; and the god-king Shun in the same manner handed the Throne to Yu after Yu had labored to control the floodwaters. The House of Han succeeded in the course of ages to the work of Yao and now passes on the sacred trust, to promote the repose of the Earth and manifest the command of Heaven.

“By the hand of the Minister Zhang Yin, this is sent with the emblems and the seal.”

Greatly rejoicing, Cao Pi received this. But he said to Jia Xu, “Although I have received two such declarations, I still fear that I may not escape being branded as a usurper by posterity.”

“That is easily arranged,” replied Jia Xu. “Direct Zhang Yin to take the seal back again, and tell Hua Xin to cause the Emperor to set up a Terrace of Abdication and select an auspicious day for the ceremony. Then assemble all the officers at the terrace, and cause the Emperor to offer the

seal with his own hands and surrender the empire to you. Thus can you dissipate all doubts and prevent any caviling.”

So the seal was once more rejected with a memorial to say so. Zhang Yin returned, and the Emperor inquired of the courtiers how he was to understand this act.

Then Hua Xin said, “Your Majesty can set up a Terrace of Abdication and assemble nobles, officers, and common people to witness the act of abdication. Thereafter, the descendants of your House shall receive favor at the hands of Wei.”

The Emperor consented and sent officials in the Office of Imperial Ceremonies to select a site at Fanyang. And there, they built a terrace of three stories, and they chose an auspicious day of the tenth month for the act of abdication. On the appointed day, Emperor Xian requested Cao Pi ascend the terrace and receive his abdication. At the foot of the terrace stood the officials, more than four hundred, and the Imperial Guards and the Tiger Guards, and soldiers to the number of three hundred thousand. Thereupon, the Emperor presented the Seal, which Cao Pi received into his hands. Then all those about the terrace knelt to listen to the reading of the manifesto:

“To the Prince of Wei. In days of old, Yao yielded the empire to Shun, and Shun in turn gave it to Yu. The will of Heaven does not follow the way of mortals but seeks the virtuous. The rule of Han has lost its virility, and the times are out of joint. When my turn came to rule, great disorder arose, and evils stalked abroad till the empire was in danger of subversion. I trusted to the military genius of the late Prince of Wei to restore order and purge away the evil, whereby to

ensure tranquility to my House. What could my singular hand do to correct this and ensure peace for my Nine Domains?

“The present Prince has succeeded his father. He is also resplendent in virtue, capable as Wu the Military King and Wen the Scholar King of the great task, brilliant in the glory of his father. The spirit of the empire is upon him; gods and men declare his worth. To him be the bright reward, and let him accept this mandate, for all say his capabilities fit him to stand beside Yu.

“As did my great predecessor, I respectfully retire that he may be set up. The revolution of Heaven brings the glory upon his person, and he will accept the high office and comfort all people by reverently obeying the decree of Heaven.”

The reading finished, the Prince of Wei, Cao Pi, proceeded to the terrace and ascended to the place of the Emperor. Then Jia Xu, at the head of the great concourse of officers, came to the foot of the terrace, and a court was held. The title of reign was changed from Prolonged Wealth, the first year, to Yellow Dawn, the first year (AD 220), and the government became that of Great Wei. An edict was then published proclaiming a general amnesty, and the title of “Founder of the Dynasty” was conferred upon the late Prince, Cao Cao.

Then, said Hua Xin, “As Heaven has but one sun, so the people can have but one ruler. The Hans have abdicated, and it is fitting that they withdraw to a distance. I pray for an edict naming the place of residence of the Liu family.”

Taking the late Emperor by the arm, Hua Xin led him forward and made him kneel below the terrace to hear the command. Then the new

Emperor Pi conferred upon him the title of Duke of Shanyang, bidding him depart forthwith.

Thereupon, Hua Xin drew his sword and in a harsh voice said, “It is an old rule that the setting up of one emperor means the degradation of another. Now, through the gracious kindness of His Majesty, you are spared personal injury and created a duke. Proceed at once and return not to court without express command.”

The late Emperor Xian controlled his emotion, thanked the Emperor Pi for his clemency and left on horseback. But those who saw the departure could not help a feeling of pity for him.

Said Cao Pi to his courtiers, “Now I understand the story of Shun and Yu.”

Then they all shouted: “O Ruler, may thy life be eternal!”



The ruling policy of Han had failed them,
Dangers pressed in upon the House,
And the land they had held so long
Passed from them forever.
Little thought he, who then snatched their scepter,
That the precedent he then claimed
Would be used in due time by another
To justify the destruction of his own House.



The officials then requested Cao Pi to make a solemn declaration to Heaven and Earth, which he did with humble obeisance.

But at this moment, a sudden storm burst whirling up the dust and rolling along stones till no one could see the face of his neighbor. All the lights on the terrace were extinguished. The newly enthroned Emperor was terrified and fell prostrate. He was borne away unconscious. When he revived, he was assisted into the Palace, but for many days, he was too ill to hold a court.

When he had somewhat recovered, he met his courtiers and received their felicitations. He rewarded Hua Xin with the post of Minister of the Interior, and Wang Lang with that of Minister of Works. All the officers were advanced in rank. But as his recovery was slow, he began to think there was too much witchcraft about the palaces at Xuchang and left it for Luoyang, where he erected a large palace complex.

The tale of these doings reached Chengdu and caused great grief to the Prince of Hanzhong, for he heard the rumors that the late Emperor had been put to death. He issued an order for mourning to be worn and instituted sacrifices, and he conferred the posthumous title of Emperor Xian the Filial on the late Emperor. This worry brought on an illness so that he could not transact the business of the court, which was left in the hands of Zhuge Liang.

Then Zhuge Liang and some of his colleagues took counsel one with another, saying, "The empire cannot be one single day without its ruler, wherefore we desire that our Prince should be honored with the title of 'Emperor.'"

Qiao Zhou said, "There have been auspicious indications. A yellow vapor has been seen in the northwest of Chengdu rising to the clouds, and

the star of emperor has greatly increased in splendor and shined like the moon. These signs mean that our Prince is to become Emperor in succession to the House of Han. There can be no doubt.”

Whereupon, Zhuge Liang and Xu Jing, at the head of a large number of officers, presented a memorial requesting the Prince to assume the title of Emperor. But Liu Bei objected.

“O Nobles, do you desire to set my feet in the way of disloyalty and wrongdoing?”

“Not so,” said Zhuge Liang. “But Cao Pi has usurped the Throne, while you are a scion of the House. It is right and proper that you succeed and prolong the line.”

But the Prince suddenly showed anger, saying, “Can I imitate the deeds of such a rebel?”

He rose and left the chamber, going to his own apartments. So the officials dispersed.

But three days later, Zhuge Liang again led a deputation to the court, and they requested that the Prince should come forth and hear them. He came, and they all prostrated themselves.

Xu Jing spoke, “The late Emperor of the Hans has been slain by Cao Pi. You, O Prince, will fail both in loyalty and rectitude if you do not assume the succession and destroy the wrongdoers. The whole empire requests you to rule that you may avenge the death of the late Emperor, and the people will be disappointed if you do not accede to their wishes.”

The Prince replied, “Although I am descended from the grandson of Emperor Jing, I have not been of the least advantage. If I assumed the title of ‘Emperor,’ how would that act differ from usurpation?”

Zhuge Liang pleaded with him again and again, but the Prince remained obdurate. Then Zhuge Liang bethought that, where argument failed, a ruse might succeed. So, having arranged the parts his several colleagues were to play, he pleaded illness and remained at home. Presently, it was told the Prince that his adviser's condition was becoming serious, wherefore Liu Bei went to see him as he lay on his couch.

"What illness affects you, my Commander-in-Chief?" asked Liu Bei.

"My heart is sad like unto burning, and I shall soon die."

"What is it that causes you such grief?"

But Zhuge Liang did not reply. And when the question was repeated again and again, he said nothing, but just lay with his eyes closed as if he was too ill to speak.

The Prince, however, pressed him to reply, and then with a deep sigh Zhuge Liang said, "Great Prince, from the day I left my humble cottage to follow you, you have always listened to my words and accepted my advice, and now this western domain, the whole of the two River Lands, is yours, just as I said it would be. But this usurpation of Cao Pi means the annihilation of the Hans and the cessation of their sacrifices, wherefore my colleagues and I desired you to become Emperor in order to crush this upstart Wei and restore the Hans. We all worked for this end, never thinking that you would refuse so obstinately to accede to our wishes. Now the officers are all annoyed, and they will drift away before very long. If you are left alone and Wu and Wei come to attack, it will be difficult for you to hold on to what you have. Do you not think this sufficient reason for me to feel grieved?"

"Unless I refused, the whole world would blame me. I am afraid," replied the Prince.

Quoting Confucius the Teacher, Zhuge Liang replied, “‘If names be not correct, language is not in accordance with the truth of things.’ In other words, if one be not really straight, people will not speak of one favorably. O Prince, you are straight, and people speak of you favorably. What more is there to say? You know that when Heaven offers and you refuse, you are certainly to blame.”

“When you have recovered, it shall be done,” said the Prince.

Up leapt Zhuge Liang from his bed, tapped at the screen in front of a doorway and in rushed a number of high officers, who prostrated themselves, crying, “So you have consented, O Prince! Then choose the day for the ceremony.”

They were all the most trusted of his court: Imperial Guardian Xu Jing, General Who Brings Peace to Han Mi Zhu, Lord of Qingyi Xiang Ju, Lord of Yangquan Liu Bao, Deputy Governor Zhao Zuo, First Secretary Yang Hong, Counselor Du Qiong, Secretary Zhang Shuang, Minister Lai Gong, Minister Huang Quan, Minister He Zong, Doctorate Scholar Yin Mo, Minister Qiao Zhou, Grand Commander Yin Chun, Imperial Commander Zhang Si, Treasurer Wang Mou, Doctorate Scholar Yi Ji, Counselor Qin Mi, and many others.

The Prince was greatly startled, and said, “You are committing me to doing what is dishonorable!”

But Zhuge Liang said, “Since consent has been given, let a terrace be built and a day chosen for the great ceremony.”

The Prince was escorted back to his palace, and Academician Xu Ci and High Counselor Meng Guang were told off to see to the building of the terrace at Mount Wudan south of Chengdu. And when all was ready, a great concourse of officers solemnly escorted the Prince, seated in a carriage of

the imperial pattern, to the ground prepared, and he went up to the altar and performed the appointed sacrifice.

This done, the solemn announcement was read in a loud voice by Qiao Zhou:

“On this twelfth day of the fourth month of the twenty-fifth year of the Rebuilt Tranquility Era, Liu Bei, the Emperor, makes this solemn announcement to Heaven and Earth.

“The dynasty of Han has possessed the empire for years without end. Formerly, Wang Mang rebelled against his sovereign, and Liu Xiu the Founder of Latter Han rose in his wrath and put Wang Mang to death, thus restoring the prerogatives of the great sacrifices to he who rightly exercised them. Lately, Cao Cao, powerful and cruel, slew the Empress, and his crimes cry aloud to Heaven for vengeance. His son, Cao Pi, carrying evils into every quarter, then seized the scepter.

“My officials and leaders, regarding the dynasty as having been overthrown, think it fitting that I, Liu Bei, would continue the line. As successor to my two warrior ancestors, Liu Bang and Liu Xiu, I will punish as Heaven decrees.

“Fearing lest my virtue be inadequate to the Imperial Throne, I consulted the voices of the people, and all, even the most distant, have said that the mandate of Heaven may not be disobeyed, the great task of my ancestors may not discontinue, and the land must have a lord, and they aver that the cynosure of all eyes is myself.

“Now I, respecting the mandate of Heaven and fearing lest the great achievements of Liu Bang and Liu Xiu may be overthrown, have

reverently selected this auspicious day to ascend the altar, sacrifice, and announce my assumption of the Imperial Seal in order to comfort all the people, rejoice the ancestors of the Dynastic House, and bring eternal tranquility to all domains.”

When the reading was ended, and the sacrifice and the prayer, Zhuge Liang, in the name of all those assembled, presented the Imperial Seal.

The Prince received it in both hands, laid it upon the altar, and again declined acceptance, saying, “I, Liu Bei, am unfitted. I pray that another, more able, may be chosen.”

But Zhuge Liang said, “Our lord has settled the empire, and his merits are manifest to the whole world. Moreover, he is of the Dynastic Family, and it is fitting that he succeed. Now that the great announcement has been made, such self-abnegation is impossible.”

So all the officers shouted, “Eternal life to the Emperor!” And they did obeisance.

Then the style of the reign was announced to be Manifest Might, the first year (AD 220). The Lady Wu was declared Empress, and the eldest son, Liu Shan, was declared Heir-Apparent. The second son Liu Yong was made Prince of Lu, and the third son Liu Li, Prince of Liang (the ancient states of Lu and Liang). Zhuge Liang became Prime Minister, and Xu Jing, Minister of the Interior. Many others were promoted, and a general amnesty was proclaimed, so that there was great rejoicing throughout all the length and breadth of the two River Lands.

Next day, the first court was held, and after the ceremonial prostration, and when they were all arranged in due order, the First Ruler made a pronouncement.

“In the Peach Garden, I and my Brothers, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, pledged ourselves to live and die together. Unhappily, my Brother Guan Yu came to his end at the hands of Sun Quan of Wu, and I must avenge him lest I fail to fulfill the Oath. Therefore will I devote the whole force of my kingdom to the destruction of Wu and the capture of its rebellious chief, whereby to wipe away my reproach.”

But just as he closed this oration, an officer threw himself down at the foot of the throne, crying, “It may not be so!”

All eyes turned to this man. He was Tiger General Zhao Yun.

“Dire vengeance will I wreak!” so cried the King.

His minister replied, “Do no such thing.”

What arguments were used will appear in the next chapter.



END OF ACT XIX

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XX:

LIU BEI'S FURY:

THE BATTLE OF YILING

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XX

CHAPTER 81

EAGER FOR VENGEANCE, ZHANG FEI IS ASSASSINATED; ATHIRST FOR RETRIBUTION, THE FIRST RULER GOES TO WAR.

Zhao Yun was opposed to the attempt to fight Wu, and spoke against the plan.

“The real rebel was not Sun Quan, but Cao Cao. Now it is his son who has usurped the Imperial Throne and called forth the anger of gods and humans. You should first aim at the Land Within the Passes by camping on the River Wei, from which to attack the rebel. After that, the loyal people in the East of the Passes will cart their grains and herd their horses to welcome your army. If you leave River Wei out of consideration in order to fight Wu, your military force will be engaged, and could you disengage it quickly in case of necessity? It is worth reflection.”

The First Ruler replied, “Sun Quan slew my Brother. Furthermore, Fu Shiren, Mi Fang, Pan Zhang, and Ma Zhong are on his side, all of whom I hate so much that I could eat their flesh with gusto and devour their relatives, whereby I should have my vengeance. Why, Noble Sir, do you obstruct me?”

“Because the enmity against Cao Cao is a public matter; vengeance for the manner of your Brother’s end is private. The empire should be placed first.”

“What care I for myriads of square miles of territory as long as my Brother is unavenged?”

So Zhao Yun's remonstrance was disregarded, and orders went forth to prepare an army against Wu. The First Ruler also sent into the Five Valleys to borrow the aid of fifty thousand tribesmen. He sent a messenger to Langzhong conferring on Zhang Fei the rank of General of the Flying Cavalry and the title of Lord of Xixiang. Zhang Fei became also Governor of Langzhong.

When Zhang Fei heard the tidings of Guan Yu's death at the hands of Sun Quan, he wept very bitterly day and night so that his raiment was soaked with his tears. His subordinates tried to cheer him with wine, but he overdrank, and this increased his ill humor, which he vented on any offender in his camp. Some of his people even died under the lash. Every day, he gazed southward, grinding his teeth with rage and glaring. He wept and groaned without ceasing.

Then a messenger was announced. He was summoned immediately, and Zhang Fei at once tore open and read his dispatches. When Zhang Fei read the edict, he accepted his new rank in all humility, bowing northward toward the imperial mandate. Then he gave a banquet to the messenger.

He said, "My enmity for the death of my Brother is deep as the sea. Why do not the officers at the court propose an avenging expedition?"

The messenger replied, "Most of them favor first the destruction of Wei. Wu is to follow."

"What sort of talk is this?" cried Zhang Fei angrily. "When we Three swore brotherhood in the Peach Garden, we pledged ourselves to die together. Now, alas! my Brother has perished by the way, and can we enjoy wealth or honors without him? I must see the Son of Heaven and pray to be

allowed to lead the van. I will wear mourning, and in that garb, I will smite Wu and capture the bandit that rules there. Sun Quan shall be sacrificed to my Brother's manes in virtue of our Oath."

Zhang Fei accompanied the messenger to Capital Chengdu.

In the meantime, the First Ruler had been training his armies. Day after day, he went to the drill-ground, and he decided upon a day to start; he would accompany the expedition.

Thereupon, a number of courtiers went to the palace of the Prime Minister to talk with Zhuge Liang, trying to get this intention modified. They said, "It is not in accordance with the importance due to the Emperor's position that he should go in personal command of this army, particularly as he has but lately assumed his throne. You, Sir, hold the weighty post of adviser in such a matter, so why do you not dissuade him?"

"I have done so, most sincerely and repeatedly, but he will not listen. But now you all come with me to the drill-ground, and we will try once more."

So they proceeded thither, with Zhuge Liang at their head, and he said, "Your Majesty has but lately taken the imperial seat. If the expedition was one to march northward to destroy the rebels against Han and in the interest of rectitude, it would be perfectly correct for the Emperor to lead the army. But an officer of high rank should more properly be sent against Wu. Why should Your Majesty expose yourself to such fatigues?"

The First Ruler was touched by the depth of his minister's concern and the sincerity of his counsel, and was on the point of yielding when the arrival of Zhang Fei was announced. Zhang Fei was immediately

summoned and came to the pavilion on the drill-ground, where he threw himself on the ground and clasped the First Ruler's feet, weeping bitterly. The First Ruler joined in the lamentation.

"Your Majesty is now ruler and too quickly forgets the Oath in the Peach Garden. Why is our Brother's death not avenged?"

The First Ruler replied, "Many officers dissuade me from such a course. I cannot act rashly."

"What do others know of our Oath? If Your Majesty will not go, then let me sacrifice myself to avenge our Brother. If I cannot, then would I rather die and see your face no more."

"Then will I go with you," said the First Ruler. "Bring your own troops from Langzhong, and I will bring my veterans to meet you at Jiangzhou. We will both attack Wu and wipe out the reproach."

As Zhang Fei rose to take leave, the First Ruler said to him, "I know that your weakness for wine leads you astray and you become very cruel in your cups, hog your people, and keep the beaten ones near you. This may be dangerous, and it is certainly the road to misfortune. Now you must be more kindly and not give way to passion as before."

Thus admonished, Zhang Fei said farewell and left.

Soon after, when the First Ruler was preparing to march out, High Minister Qin Mi memorialized, saying, "That Your Majesty, the Lord of a Myriad Chariots, should risk his person in what is not the way of perfect rectitude is not what the ancients would have done. I pray that this may be reflected upon."

But the First Ruler replied, "Guan Yu and I were as one body, and the way of perfect rectitude is here. Have you forgotten?"

But the officer remained at his feet and said, “I fear disaster if Your Majesty disregards your servant’s words.”

The First Ruler replied angrily, “Why do you use such bad words when I desire to march?”

He bade the executioners thrust forth and put to death the bold speaker. Still, Qin Mi’s face showed no sign of fear.

He only smiled, saying, “I die without regret. It is a pity that this newly established state should be overturned ere it be well-begun.”

Other officials interceding, the death punishment was remitted, but the faithful officer was committed to prison.

“Your fate will be decided when the Army of Vengeance returns,” said the First Ruler.

Zhuge Liang sent up a memorial in favor of Qin Mi, saying:

“I, Zhuge Liang, address Your Majesty in my own name and those of my colleagues. We regard as most grievous the recent events—Wu’s perfidy, by which Jingzhou was lost, the star of a great general was brought down, and the pillar holding the sky was broken—and we shall never forget. But it is to be remembered that the crime of overturning the Throne of Han rests on Cao Cao, and the fault of driving away the Liu Family lies not on Sun Quan. We venture to think that the destruction of Wei would cause the submission of Wu, wherefore we beg consideration of the valuable words of Qin Mi. Thus the army will be spared needless exertion and occasion given to make other plans for the prosperity of the Throne and the happiness of the people.”

But having listened to the memorial, the First Ruler threw it to the floor, saying, “I have decided, and no remonstrance should be raised!”

Then he appointed the Prime Minister to take care of his son and the two River Lands. Then the Generals of the Flying Cavalry—Ma Chao and Ma Dai—together with the General Who Defends the North, Wei Yan, were ordered to guard Hanzhong against Wei. The Tiger General Zhao Yun was to be in reserve and to control the supplies; Huang Quan and Cheng Jin were made Counselors; Ma Liang and Chen Zhen, Secretaries; Huang Zhong, the Van Leader, assisted by the Marching Generals Feng Xi and Zhang Nan; Fu Tong and Zhang Yi, Marching Commanders of the Center Army; Zhao Rong and Liao Hua, the rear guards. The whole army, including the borrowed foreign troops, numbered seven hundred fifty thousand, and high-rank officials amounted several hundred. And the “tiger” day of the seventh month of the first year of Manifest Might was selected as the most propitious day for the start.

As soon as Zhang Fei had returned to his post, he issued orders that his soldiers should be ready to march in three days and the whole body was to be in mourning, white uniforms and whitened arms.

Just after the order appeared, two generals named Fan Jiang and Zhang Da came to their chief, saying, “The time allowed is insufficient to make white flags and armors. Pray give us more time, General.”

“I am hot to avenge my Brother!” roared Zhang Fei. “My only regret is that I cannot reach the miserable wretch’s country tomorrow. Do you dare to disobey my order?”

Zhang Fei called in the lictors, had the two officers bound to trees, and ordered each to receive fifty lashes.

At the close of the flogging, he said, "Now you will be ready tomorrow. If you are not, I will put you to death as an example!"

The two generals returned to their place, spitting blood and hot with anger.

They said one to another, "We have been beaten today. What about tomorrow? This man's temper is unbearable, and if things are not ready, we shall suffer death."

"Suppose we slay him," suddenly said Zhang Da, "since if we do not, he will kill us."

"But how can we get near him?"

"If we are to have a chance to live, he will get drunk and go to bed tonight; if we are to die, he will remain sober."

They made all their arrangements for the crime.

That day, Zhang Fei was greatly disturbed in his mind, and restless. He told some of his subordinates, saying, "I feel nervous and creepy and shivery and cannot rest. What does it mean?"

"This is due to too much brooding over the loss of your Brother," said they.

Then Zhang Fei bade them bring in wine, and he drank with his officers. Presently, he became quite intoxicated and lay down on a couch in his tent.

Meanwhile, the two assassins had followed all his doings, and when they knew he was lying on his couch intoxicated and incapable, they went into the tent, each armed with a water-sharp dagger. They got rid of the

attendants by saying they had confidential matters to talk about and so got into the inner rooms.

But even then, they dared do nothing, for Zhang Fei slept always with open eyelids, and he lay on his couch as if still awake. However, huge snores soon convinced them that their victim really slept, and they crept to the side of the couch. Then, both stabbed simultaneously deep into the body. Zhang Fei uttered one cry and lay still. So he died at the hand of assassins at the age of fifty-five years.



He who whipped the inspector in Anxi,
Who swept vile rebels from the land of Han,
And thereby won great glory for the Lius,
Whose valor shone at Tiger Trap Pass,
Who turned the tide of victory at Long Slope Bridge,
Who freed Yan Yan and thus won a friend
That helped him and his Brothers conquer Shu,
Whose wisdom defeated Zhang He to get Hanzhong,
Is dead, the victim of assassins' blows,
Not his vengeance for his Brother's death on Wu.
Langzhong will grieve him all the ages through.



Having done their victim to death, Fan Jiang and Zhang Da hacked off his head, and made off for Wu without loss of time. Fleeing with them were a few dozen close subordinates. When the deed was known, they had gotten too far for capture.

The assassination was reported in a memorial by a commander of Zhang Fei named Hu Ban, who had been sent from Jingzhou to see the First Ruler and then commissioned to serve under Zhang Fei. He wrote a memorial to the First Ruler and bade the eldest son, Zhang Bao, prepare a coffin for the remains. After the ceremony, leaving his younger brother, Zhang Shao, to hold Langzhong, Zhang Bao went to see the Emperor.

The day of departure had already come, and the First Ruler had left the capital. Zhuge Liang and many officers had escorted him out of the city for three miles and taken leave.

Returning to Chengdu, Zhuge Liang felt ill at ease, and he remarked to his colleagues, "If Fa Zheng had been alive, he would have been able to interdict this expedition."

One night, the First Ruler felt nervous and shuddered from time to time. He could not sleep, so he went out of his tent and looked up at the stars. Suddenly he saw a bright meteor fall in the northwest and began to wonder what the portent meant. He sent at once to ask Zhuge Liang to tell him.

Zhuce Liang sent back the reply: "This means the loss of a great leader, and there will be bad news in a few days."

So the army was halted and did not march. Then the arrival of a message from Hu Ban from Langzhong was announced.

The First Ruler's foreboding increased, and he stamped his foot, saying, "Alas! My other Brother is gone!"

Opening the letter, he found it was indeed so. As he read the news of the assassination, he uttered a loud cry and fell in a swoon. He was raised,

and presently they brought him back to life.

Next day, they reported a body of horsemen coming. The First Ruler went out of the camp to look at them and presently saw a young general, dressed all in white armor, sweeping forth in quite a terror. The First Ruler recognized that it was Zhang Bao.

As soon as Zhang Bao reached the First Ruler's presence, he dismounted and bowed to the earth, weeping, "My father has been killed by Fan Jiang and Zhang Da. They have gone over to Wu, taking my father's head with them!"

The news was very grievous, and the First Ruler burst into tears and even refused food.

His officers remonstrated, saying, "Now Your Majesty has the loss of two Brothers to avenge, and you must not destroy yourself."

So after a time he began to eat and drink, and he then offered the leadership of the van to Zhang Bao, saying, "Are you and Hu Ban willing to lead your troops to attack Wu and to avenge your father?"

"For my country or for my father, I would shrink from no sacrifice," said the young man.

Just as the force for the young man's leadership was being organized, another party of horsemen approached, also dressed in white armors. This was a small force under Guan Xing, son of Guan Yu. The youth also threw himself to the ground and wept.

At sight of Guan Xing, thoughts stirred in the First Ruler's breast, and he burst into tears. Neither reason nor persuasion could stop them.

"I think of the plain and simple days of long ago when we pledged ourselves one to the other. Now I am Emperor. How I should rejoice to

share my good fortune with them! But they have met violent deaths, and the sight of these two youths wrings my heart to the very core.”

“Young gentlemen, please retire,” said the officers to the two youthful generals, “and let our Sacred One repose his dragon body.”

They went.

Said the attendants, “Your Majesty is no longer young. You are over sixty, remember, and it is not fitting that you give way to such extreme sorrow.”

“But my Brothers—dead,” wailed the First Ruler. “How can I live without them?” He broke into a fresh paroxysm and beat his head on the ground.

“What can be done?” asked the officers one to another. “He is in such trouble! How can we comfort him?”

Ma Liang said, “Sire, it is bad for the army to spend whole days in wailing and tears when leading against the enemy.”

And then Chen Zhen said, “There is a certain hermit living among the Blue Mountains, near Chengdu, who is said to be three hundred years old. He is called Li Yin, and people say he is a seer. Let us tell His Majesty and let him send for this old man that he may know what the future may have in store. It will have more weight than anything we can say.”

They went to the First Ruler and told him. He agreed to summon the seer and sent Chen Zhen with the command. Soon, the messenger reached the town near the hills and asked the people where the prophet dwelt. They led him far into a secluded valley like a fairy village, very unlike any ordinary spot. Soon a lad came to receive the visitor.

“You are surely Chen Zhen.”

Chen Zhen was startled that the lad knew him, and still more so at the familiar address, and said, "O superhuman boy, how do you know my name so well?"

"Last evening, my master told me that a messenger with an imperial command would come today and mentioned your name."

"Truly, he is more than wise," said Chen Zhen. "His reputation is not unfounded."

So the two proceeded to the old man's abode, and Chen Zhen declared his errand. The old man said he was too aged to travel.

"But the Emperor anxiously desires to see you face-to-face, if haply you would not mind making the effort."

In the end, and after much persuasion, Li Yin consented and went. The First Ruler received him affably, surprised at the contrast between his hoary head and fresh boyish complexion. The venerable one had green eyes, with square and sparkling pupils. His carriage was erect, and he stood straight as a pine tree.

This is no common man, thought the First Ruler, and he treated him with distinguished courtesy.

The seer said, "I am but an old man of the barren hill country, without learning or wisdom. You shame me, O Emperor, by calling me, and I know not why."

"My two Brothers and I swore a mutual Oath some thirty years ago. But now my Brothers have gone, both by violent deaths. I would lead a great army to avenge them and wish to know how the expedition will end. Hearing that you, Venerable Sir, are learned in the deeper mysteries, I sent for you and beg you to tell me."

"But this is fate. It is not for an old man like me to know."

But the First Ruler pressed him to say. However, the aged one got paper and a brush and wrote “soldiers, horses, weapons” again and again on many sheets of paper. Having done this, he suddenly tore them into fragments. Further, he drew a picture of a tall man lying supine and another above him digging a grave. And over all he wrote “white.”

After this, he bowed and departed, leaving the First Ruler annoyed.

“This is only a demented man. What he says is not worthy of confidence,” said the First Ruler. And he burned the paper.

Then he ordered an advance at full speed.

Zhang Fei’s son, Zhang Bao, came in, saying, “Hu Ban and his army have come. I pray that I may be appointed to lead the van.”

The First Ruler admired his noble intent and gave him a Van Leader’s seal.

But just as Zhang Bao was attaching the seal to his girdle, another youth boldly stepped forth and said, “Leave that seal to me!”

It was Guan Xing, son of Guan Yu.

“I have already received my commission,” said Zhang Bao.

“What abilities have you for such a task?” cried Guan Xing.

“That I have been training as a soldier since my boyhood. I can shoot and never miss.”

“I should like to see your prowess,” said the First Ruler, “that I may decide who is the better.”

Zhang Bao ordered some of his people to set up a flag at a hundred paces, and on the flag, he drew a heart in red. Then he took his bow and shot three arrows, each of which went through the heart. Those present commended the performance.

Then Guan Xing seized his bow, saying, "What is it to hit such a mark?"

Just as he said this a flock of wild geese flew over his head.

"I will hit the third of the flying geese," said he. He shot, and the third fell.

"Fine!" cried all the assembly as one voice.

But Zhang Bao was enraged. Leaping on his steed, he seized the long Serpent Halberd left him by his father, crying, "Dare you try a real combat?"

Guan Xing took up the challenge at once. He sprang into the saddle, took his great saber, and galloped out.

"You can use the spear; think you that I cannot wield a sword?" cried he.

The two impetuous youths were on the point of a battle when the First Ruler bade them hold.

"Do not behave so badly!" cried he.

Both dropped out of the saddle, threw aside their weapons, ran to his feet, and begged pardon.

"Young men, from the time I left my native place Zhuo and swore brotherhood with your fathers, they were as my own flesh and blood. You two are also brothers, and you should help each other in vengeance rather than quarrel and dispute. You have lost the sense of rectitude while your fathers' deaths are still recent, and what will happen in future?"

Both fell at his feet and implored forgiveness.

"Which of you two is the elder?" asked the First Ruler.

"I am the elder by a year," said Zhang Bao.

The First Ruler then bade Guan Xing bow to Zhang Bao as to an elder brother, and there, in front of all, they broke an arrow as a pledge that each would always succor the other.

Then the First Ruler issued a mandate appointing Hu Ban the Van Leader, and the two young men were enrolled as his own escort.

The advance began on land and on water, and they made a brave show as they moved against the land of Wu.

In the meantime, the two assassins, Fan Jiang and Zhang Da, with the grim evidence of their deed, duly reached Wu and told their story to the Marquis who received them.

Then Sun Quan said to his assembled officers, "Liu Bei has declared himself Emperor and is leading against us in person a great host of more than seven hundred thousand. What shall we do, for the danger is imminent?"

They all turned pale and looked one at another. Then Zhuge Jin spoke out.

"I have been in your service these many years and have never justified the favor you have shown me. I will risk my life and go to this Liu Bei of Shu that I may talk to him plainly and prove to him the advantages of friendship and alliance against Cao Pi."

This offer pleased Sun Quan, who then appointed Zhuge Jin as his messenger to try to induce the First Ruler to keep the peace.

Messengers pass when states are at wrangle;
May this one succeed and unravel this tangle!

What fortune attended this messenger will be related in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XX

CHAPTER 82

SUN QUAN SUBMITS TO WEI, RECEIVING THE NINE DIGNITIES; THE FIRST RULER ATTACKS WU, REWARDING SIX ARMIES.

In the eighth month of the first year of Manifest Might (AD 221), the First Ruler marched at the head of his army and camped at Baidicheng (City of the White Emperor), through the Kui Pass. His advanced guard had gone beyond the River Lands when his attendants told him that Zhuge Jin had come as a messenger from Wu. He told them not to admit Zhuge Jin.

But Huang Quan said, “His brother being your Prime Minister, Zhuge Jin is certainly come on some important mission. Your Majesty ought to see him and hear what he says. If his proposals are admissible, then agree; if not, he can be made use of to take knowledge of your intentions to Sun Quan and let Sun Quan know that you intend to punish his crime.”

Then the First Ruler gave way, and the messenger was brought in. He bowed down to the earth.

“Zhuge Jin, you have come a long journey. What is its object?” said the First Ruler.

“My brother has long served Your Majesty; I have come at the risk of my life to discuss Jingzhou affairs. When Guan Yu was at Jingzhou, my master repeatedly sought to ally the two families by marriage but was refused. When Guan Yu attacked Xiangyang, Cao Cao wrote again and again urging my master to attack Jingzhou. But the Marquis was unwilling, and it was the enmity between your Brother and Lu Meng that led to the attack and the unfortunate success.

“My master is now very sorry for it, but it was Lu Meng’s doing. However, Lu Meng is now dead, and his enmity has died with him. Moreover, Lady Sun is always thinking over returning to you. My master now proposes to send back the lady, to bind and hand over to you those officers who surrendered, and to restore Jingzhou. If the two houses swear perpetual amity, then we may join forces against Cao Pi and punish his usurpation.”

To this harangue, the First Ruler only replied, “You of East Wu killed my brother. Yet you dare come with your artful talk!”

Zhuge Jin said, “I only wish to discuss the relative importance of the issues. Your Majesty is an Imperial Uncle, and Cao Pi has seized the throne of your House. Yet you do not think of destroying the usurper, and on the other hand, you disregard the most honorable position in the world for the sake of a so-called Brother, a connection of another name. Surely this is rejecting the chief for the subordinate, the main issue for a detail.

“The Middle Land is the biggest part of the empire, and the two capitals, Luoyang and Changan, are both famous as places whence the two, one the Founder, the other the Restorer, of the Hans, initiated their mighty task. Your Majesty takes no thought of these but would dispute over Jingzhou. In other words, the important is abandoned for the worthless.

“All the world knows of your assumption of the dignity of Emperor and that you will assuredly restore the Hans and rescue their territory. Only now you do not try to deal with Wei; you only desire to attack Wu. I venture to think you have made a bad choice.”

All this argument only added fuel to the fire.

“The slayer of my Brother shall not live in the same world as I. You ask me not to fight. I will cease when I have slain your master. Were it not for the sake of your brother, I would behead you at once. As it is, you may

go, and you may tell your master to cleanse his neck ready for the blade of the executioner.”

Zhuge Jin saw that the position was hopeless and took his leave to return to the South Land.

But while Zhuge Jin had been absent, Zhang Zhao said to Sun Quan, “Zhuge Jin knows something of the strength of the Shu armies, and he made this mission an excuse to get out of danger. He will not return.”

The Marquis replied, “He and I are sworn friends—friends to the death. I shall not wrong him, nor will he betray me. When he was at Chaisang and Zhuge Liang came to our country, I wanted my friend Zhuge Jin to persuade his brother to remain with me. His reply was that his brother would not remain any more than he himself would go: each would be faithful to his salt. That was quite clear enough. How could he desert me after that? Our friendship has something of the divine in it, and no talk from outside can sow dissension between us.”

Even as Sun Quan spoke, the servants told him that Zhuge Jin had returned.

“What do you think now?” said Sun Quan.

Zhang Zhao retired, overwhelmed with shame. The luckless messenger unfolded his tale of failure.

“Then the South Land is in great danger,” said Sun Quan, as he heard the story.

But a certain man here interposed, saying, “I have a way out of the difficulty.”

He was Counselor Zhao Zi.

“What good scheme do you propose, friend Zhao Zi?” said Sun Quan.

“Let my lord draw up a document, which I will take to Cao Pi in Wei, making a full statement of the case, and get him to attack Hanzhong and so draw off the danger from our land.”

“Though the suggestion is good, yet shall we not lose something of our dignity by that?” said Sun Quan.

“If there is any such thing, I will simply jump into the river—I could not look the South Land’s people in the face again.”

Sun Quan was satisfied and composed the memorial, styling himself “Minister.” Therein, Zhao Zi was duly appointed messenger. He took the document and soon reached Capital Xuchang, where he first sought out the High Minister Jia Xu and then saw the others.

Next day, Jia Xu stood forth at court and said, “East Wu has sent a high officer, Zhao Zi, with a memorial.”

“Because he wants the armies of Shu driven off,” said Cao Pi, smiling.

But he summoned Zhao Zi, who, having prostrated himself in the outer court, handed in his memorial.

After reading it, Cao Pi said, “What sort of an overlord is the Marquis?”

“Intelligent, clear-sighted, wise, brave, and perspicacious,” was the reply.

Cao Pi laughed, “Your praise is none too enthusiastic.”

“I do not wish to overstate,” replied Zhao Zi, “but my master has shown various qualities at different times. He made use of Lu Su among the officials of high ranks, which shows his intelligence. He chose Lu Meng as leader of all armies, which showed his clear-sightedness. He captured Yu Jin but did not hurt him, which shows his kindness. He took Jingzhou without slaughter, which shows his wisdom. He maintains the Three Rivers

so as to command the respect of the empire, which shows his boldness. Lastly, he bows before Your Majesty, which shows his perspicacity. You see now that my epithets are justifiable.”

“Is he at all learned?”

“Sire, remember he commands a large fleet of ten thousand battleships and a huge army of a million armored soldiers. He endeavors to find wise and capable people to help him, and his mind is full of plans and projects. When he has a little leisure, he reads the histories and the annals, for the sake of the general lessons to be learned therefrom. He is no dryasdust pedant seeking remarkable passages and culling model sentences.”

“Do you think I could overcome Wu?”

“If a large state has military force to attack, a small one has also preparations for defense.”

“Does Wu fear Wei?” asked Cao Pi.

“How can you think so, considering our army of a million armored soldiers and the defensive moats we have in the River Han and the Great River?”

“How many such persons as high minister does Wu possess?”

“Nearly a hundred intelligent and specially qualified ministers like your servants; of my sort of ordinary knowledge, there are too many to reckon up.”

Cao Pi sighed, saying, “The book says, ‘Going on a mission without losing the dignity of the master.’ That is the sort of man you are!”

Thereupon he issued the mandate ordering Xing Zhen, Minister of Ceremonies and Sacrifices, to be his ambassador to Wu, bearing for Sun Quan the title of “Prince of Wu” and allowing him to use the “Nine Signs of Honors.”

But when the messenger had gone out of the city, Liu Ye went to remonstrate, saying, "Sun Quan has done this for fear of the armies of Shu. In my opinion, if Shu and Wu fight, heaven will make an end of one country. If you will send an army across the Great River to attack, and should Shu attack at the same time from the west, Wu as a state will disappear. If Wu goes, then Shu will be left alone and can be dealt with when you will."

"But I cannot attack Sun Quan now that he has come over to my side. It would prevent anyone else from doing so. No! I will really accept his submission. It is the best course."

Liu Ye said, "After all, though talented, he is but a General of the Flying Cavalry and Lord of Nanzhang of the decadent days of Han. His rank is low and his influence small, yet he still wants to contest the Middle Land. If you promote him to kingly rank, he is only one step below yourself. While doubting the reality of his submission, you give him an exalted rank and increase his influence. Surely this is only giving wings to a tiger."

"Not at all; I am helping neither Wu nor Shu. I am waiting till they are at grips, and if one goes under, there will be only one left to destroy. That will be easy. However, say no more, for I have decided."

Whereupon, Xing Zhen was bidden to take the mandate and the Nine Dignities and accompany Zhao Zi to Wu.

Sun Quan assembled his officers to discuss how the armies of Shu could be driven off. Then came the news of princely rank conferred by Wei. By the

rules of courtesy, the messenger bearing the edict should be met at a great distance from the capital, but Gu Yong was opposed to accepting the rank.

“My lord, you should style yourself ‘Supreme Ruler’ and ‘Lord’ of the nine territories. You should not receive any rank from Wei.”

“But on one occasion, Liu Bang received the principedom of Han (now Hanzhong) from Xiang Yu. I have to depend upon circumstances. Why refuse?”

Sun Quan discussed the matter no more but went out at the head of a great gathering of officers to welcome the messenger.

Xing Zhen, the bearer of the mandate from Wei, on first arrival comported himself haughtily as the representative of a superior country and an imperial ambassador. And when he entered the city, he did not descend from his carriage. Wherefore, Zhang Zhao ventured to rebuke him.

“Everyone must obey the rules of courtesy as everyone must respect the laws. You, Sir, are behaving proudly as if there was no such thing as a sword in this country.”

Immediately, the messenger descended from his chariot and was presented to Sun Quan. Afterwards, they went in side by side.

As the cavalcade proceeded, a loud voice was heard in the rear of the two carriages, crying, “Here we are, prevented from risking our lives in smashing Wei and swallowing Shu, and our lord receives a title from another man. Are not such things shameful?”

The man was Xu Sheng.

And Xing Zhen sighed, saying, “If all the leaders and ministers of the South Land are like this, the Prince of Wu will not long be content to obey another.”

However, the title was accepted. And when he had received the felicitations of his officers, Sun Quan gave orders to collect beautiful works in jade and brilliant pearls, which were sent to Wei as return gifts.

Not long after came tidings of the forces of Shu: “The First Ruler, together with King Shamohe of the Man nations, leads his own army and a large number of tribesmen from the east and south. Furthermore, he is aided by the two Shu generals of Dongxi, Liu Ning and Du Lu, with their cohorts. They advance both by land and by water: a mighty host, of which the shouting shakes the heavens. The naval force has already come out at Wukou, and the land force has reached Zigui.”

Although Sun Quan had been created a prince, Emperor Pi would not send a relief army.

When the terrible news came, the Prince of Wu asked present advice from his officers, saying, “How are we going to meet those forces?”

But there was none to help him. They only muttered and were silent.

“Ah!” sighed he. “After Zhou Yu, I had Lu Su, and Lu Meng succeeded Lu Su. But now they have all three gone, and there is no one to share my troubles!”

But just then a very youthful general stepped out from the ranks of the officials and said, with a lowly obeisance, “Though I am young, I am quite versed in the books of war, and with a few legions I could destroy the power of Shu.”

Sun Quan recognized Sun Huan, the son of Sun Hu. Sun Hu was originally from the Yu family, and he had served under Sun Jian, Sun Quan’s father. Sun Jian loved the youth and gave him his own family name of Sun and so made him a member of his own clan. Sun Hu had four sons, of whom Sun Huan was the eldest. Sun Huan was an expert archer and

horseman and had accompanied Sun Quan in several campaigns, where he had distinguished himself well and had been given a rank of Commander. At this time, he was twenty-five.

“How do you think you can overcome them?”

“There are two able commanders under my command named Xie Jing and Li Yi, both very brave. With a few legions, I will capture Liu Bei.”

“Though you are brave, nephew, you are still young and ought to have an assistant.”

Thereupon, Tiger General Zhu Ran stepped forward, saying, “Let me go.”

Sun Quan consented. He promoted Sun Huan to General of the Left Army, and he told off fifty thousand of soldiers and marines, over whom he placed Sun Huan and Zhu Ran as joint commanders. They were to start as soon as possible.

The scouts reported that the army of Shu was camped at Yidu, and Sun Huan led half his army to the borders of that county and camped in three stockades.

Now the Shu General Hu Ban had received his seal as Leader of the Van. From the day he left the borders of the River Lands, he had had uninterrupted success. Everyone had submitted at the mere rumor of his coming. He had conducted his campaign with unstained swords as far as Yidu. When he heard that Sun Huan was camped there to oppose his progress, he sent back rapid messengers to the First Ruler, who was then at Zigui.

The First Ruler got angry, saying, "So they think this youth is able to withstand me?"

"Since this nephew of Sun Quan has been made a leader," said Guan Xing, "it is unnecessary to send a leader of high rank. Let me go."

"I was just wishing to see what you could do," said the First Ruler, and he gave him orders to go.

Just as Guan Xing was leaving, Zhang Bao stepped forth and asked permission to go, too.

"Then both go, my nephews," said the Emperor. "But you must be prudent and not hasty."

So they took leave, collected their troops, and advanced.

Sun Huan, hearing of the coming of a large army, called out all his troops and drew up his array. His two famous generals, Li Yi and Xie Jing, were placed by the great standard. They watched the soldiers of Shu filing out and noted two leaders in silver helmets and silver armors, riding on white horses, and whose flags were white. First came Zhang Bao with a long spear, and then Guan Xing carrying a great saber.

"Sun Huan, you tiny rascal, your time has come!" cried Zhang Bao abusively. "How dare you stand against the forces of Heaven?"

"Your father is a headless devil," cried Sun Huan, no way backward in reviling, "and you are going just now to join him. Don't you see?"

Then Zhang Bao rode at Sun Huan. From behind his chief, Xie Jing dashed out to meet him. They fought nearly forty bouts, and then Xie Jing ran away with Zhang Bao in pursuit.

When Li Yi saw his comrade overcome, he whipped up his steed and came into the fray, whirling his silvered battleax. Zhang Bao fought twenty bouts with him, but neither got the better.

Then, in the army of Wu, a marching general named Tan Xiong, seeing that his two comrades could not overcome Zhang Bao, shot a treacherous arrow from the ranks and wounded Zhang Bao's steed. Feeling the pang of the wound, the horse bolted back to its own side but fell before it reached it, throwing its rider sprawling on the ground. Seeing this, Li Yi turned and rode toward the prostrate leader to slay him with his battleax. But just as he was about to deliver his blow, lo! a red flash came between, and his head rolled along the earth.

The red flash was Guan Xing's great sword. Seeing the horse fall and Li Yi coming up, he had rushed in and dealt that fatal blow. And he had saved Zhang Bao from death. Then they attacked and lay on so that Sun Huan suffered a great defeat. Then each side beat the retreat and drew off.

Next day, Sun Huan came out to offer battle again, and the two Cousins went forth together. Guan Xing, from horseback by the main standard, challenged his enemy. Sun Huan rode out fiercely, and they two fought near thirty bouts. But Sun Huan was not strong enough and drew off. The two youths followed and reached his camp. Hu Ban, together with Feng Xi and Zhang Nan, also launched another attack. Zhang Bao helped them with all his force and was the first to force his way into the ranks of Wu. He came across Xie Jing, whom he slew with a spear thrust. The soldiers of Wu scattered and fled, and the victory was on the side of Shu.

But Guan Xing was missing. Zhang Bao was desperate, saying, "If something wrong happens to Guan Xing, I will not live!"

So he girded on his huge spear and rode far and wide seeking him. Presently, he met Guan Xing, bearing his sword in his left hand, while his right held a captive.

"Who is this?" asked Zhang Bao.

“In the melee I met an enemy,” said Guan Xing, “and I took him prisoner.”

Then Zhang Bao recognized Tan Xiong, the man who had let fly the treacherous arrow that had brought down his horse. The two returned to camp, where they slew their prisoner and poured a libation of his blood to the dead horse.

After this, they drew up a report of the victory for the First Ruler. Sun Huan had lost his generals—Li Yi, Xie Jing, and Tan Xiong—as well as several other officers and many troops. His army was too weakened to continue the campaign, so he halted and sent back to Wu for reinforcements.

Then Generals Zhang Nan and Feng Xi said to Hu Ban, “The power of Wu is broken. Let us raid their encampment.”

But Hu Ban said, “Though so many have been lost, there are many left. Zhu Ran’s marine force is in a strong position on the river and is untouched. If you carry out your plan and the marines land in force and cut off our retreat, we shall be in difficulty.”

“That is easily met,” said Zhang Nan. “Let each of the two leaders Guan Xing and Zhang Bao take five thousand troops and go into ambush in the valleys to guard against any such move.”

Said Hu Ban, “I think it better to send some persons to pretend to be deserters. Let them tell Zhu Ran of the plan to raid the camp, and Zhu Ran will come to the rescue as soon as he sees fire. Then the ambushing soldiers can attack him.”

They thought this a fine plan, and they made the necessary arrangements.

Hearing of the ill success and losses of his colleague Sun Huan, Zhu Ran was already thinking of going to his help, when a few deserters appeared and boarded his ship.

He questioned them, and they said, "We are Feng Xi's soldiers, and we have deserted because of unfair treatment. We have a secret to tell."

"What secret can you betray?"

"Tonight, Feng Xi is going to make an attack upon General Sun Huan's camp. He thinks it is a good chance. They are going to raise a fire as a signal."

Zhu Ran saw no reason to doubt the men, and he sent off at once to tell Sun Huan. But the messenger never arrived, as Guan Xing intercepted and slew him.

Then Zhu Ran deliberated upon going to help.

"You cannot trust what those soldiers said," said Cui Yu, one of the commanders. "Both army and navy will be lost if anything goes wrong. No, General; rather keep careful watch and let me go."

Zhu Ran saw this was the wiser plan, so he gave Cui Yu ten thousand troops, and Cui Yu left.

That night Hu Ban, Zhang Nan, and Feng Xi made an attack on Sun Huan's camp from three directions, and the soldiers were scattered and fled. Then the three generals set the whole camp on fire. Cui Yu saw the flames as he marched and pressed on. Then just as he was passing some hills, he came upon the ambush, and Guan Xing and Zhang Bao poured out from left and right. Taken by surprise, Cui Yu could only try to flee, but he met Zhang Bao, who made him prisoner.

When Zhu Ran heard the news, he was panic-stricken and dropped downriver twenty miles. The remnant of Sun Huan's troops ran away,

following their leader.

As they fled, Sun Huan inquired, "Is there any city ahead that has good defense and granary?"

They told him, saying, "To the north is Yiling, where we can camp."

So they went thither.

Just as they reached the wall, their pursuers came up, and the city was besieged in all four sides.

Guan Xing and Zhang Bao brought the captive Cui Yu back to Zigui and saw the First Ruler, who rejoiced at their success. The prisoner was put to death, and the soldiers were rewarded. The effect of these victories spread far, so that the leaders in Wu had no inclination to fight.

When the Prince of Wu received Sun Huan's call for help, he was frightened and knew not what to do.

So he called a great council, and he said, "Sun Huan is besieged in Yiling, and Zhu Ran has been defeated on the river. What can be done?"

Then Zhang Zhao said, "Though several of your commanders are dead, yet have you many left. Half a score is enough to relieve your anxiety. Send Han Dang as Commander, with Zhou Tai as his second, Pan Zhang as Van Leader, Ling Tong as Rear Guard, and Gan Ning in reserve. You want one hundred thousand troops."

Sun Quan made the appointments as proposed. Gan Ning was very seriously ill just then, but he accepted the task.

Now the First Ruler had made a line of forty camps from Wukou and Jianping to Yiling, spreading twenty-five miles' distance.

He was exceedingly pleased with his two nephews, who had distinguished themselves again and again, and he said, "The generals that have followed me since the early days have gotten aged and thus no longer of much use. But now that I have such two valorous nephews, I have no fear for Sun Quan."

Then he heard of the coming of Sun Quan's army under Han Dang and Zhou Tai, and he wished to select a commander to oppose the Wu army.

But those near him reported: "Huang Zhong and a half-dozen other officers have run off to Wu!"

"Huang Zhong is no traitor," said the First Ruler, smiling. "It is only that he heard what I happened to say about old and useless leaders. He will not accept he is useless and wants to prove he is not."

Then he called Guan Xing and Zhang Bao and said to them, "Huang Zhong may fail in this enterprise of his, so I hope you two will not mind going to his assistance. As soon as there is some success to report, get him to return and do not let him come to grief."

So the two got their troops together and went off to assist the aged warrior.

When young, success is easy, thine at will.

The aged servant fails, though willing still.

The next chapter will relate the outcome of Huang Zhong's expedition.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XX

CHAPTER 83

FIGHTING AT XIAOTING, THE FIRST RULER CAPTURES AN ENEMY;
DEFENDING THE THREE GORGES, A STUDENT TAKES SUPREME
COMMAND.

In spring, the first month of the second year of Manifest Might (AD 221), the Veteran warrior Huang Zhong was among the officers who followed the First Ruler to war against Wu. When he heard his master talk of old and incapable leaders, he girded on his sword and, with a few faithful followers, made his way to the camps at Yiling. He was welcomed by Hu Ban, the commander in charge of the siege there.

“For what reason do you come, O Veteran General?” asked he.

“I have followed the Emperor ever since he left Changsha, and I have done diligent service. I am now over seventy, but my appetite is still good for ten pounds of meat, and I can still stretch the strongest bow, and I can still ride three hundred miles without fatigue. I am not weak or worn out. But our master has been talking of old and useless leaders, and I am come to take part in the fight with Wu. If I slay one of their leaders, he will see I may be old but not worn out.”

Just about that time, the leading division of the Wu army drew near the camp. Huang Zhong hastily rose, went out of the tent, and mounted to go into the battle.

“Aged General, be careful!” said the generals.

But Huang Zhong paid no attention and set off at full speed. However, Hu Ban and Feng Xi rode out to help him. As soon as the old warrior saw

the array of the enemy, he pulled up and challenged Commander Pan Zhang of the vanguard.

Pan Zhang sent out one of his generals, Shi Ji, to take the challenge. Shi Ji despised his seed antagonist and rode lightly forth with his spear set, but in the third bout Huang Zhong cut him down. This angered Pan Zhang, who flourished the Green-Dragon Saber, the great sword of the old warrior Guan Yu which had passed into his possession, and took up the battle. The two fought several bouts, and neither was victor, for Huang Zhong was brimful of energy. His antagonist, seeing that he could not overcome the old man, galloped off. Huang Zhong pursued and smote his army and scored a full victory.

On his way back, Huang Zhong fell in with the two youthful generals, Guan Xing and Zhang Bao.

“We come by the sacred command to aid you if necessary. And now that you have scored so complete a victory, we pray you return to the main camp,” said they.

But the Veteran would not. Next day, Pan Zhang came to challenge again, and Huang Zhong at once accepted. Nor would he allow Guan Xing and Zhang Bao to come with him or accept assistance from any other.

He led out five thousand troops. Before many bouts had been exchanged, Pan Zhang made a feint and got away. Huang Zhong pursued, shouting to him not to flee.

“Flee not, for now will I avenge the death of Guan Yu!” cried he.

Huang Zhong pursued some ten miles, but presently he fell into an ambush and found himself attacked from all sides—Zhou Tai on the left, Han Dang on the right, Ling Tong from behind, and the erstwhile-fleeing

Pan Zhang turned to attack the front—so that he was surrounded and hemmed in. Huang Zhong forced his way to retreat.

But suddenly a great storm came on, the wind blowing violently, and as Huang Zhong was passing some hills, an enemy cohort led by Ma Zhong came down the slopes, and one of the arrows wounded the Veteran in the armpit. He nearly fell from his horse with the shock. The soldiers of Wu, seeing Huang Zhong wounded, came on all together, but soon the two youthful generals, Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, drove them off and scattered them. Thus they rescued Huang Zhong.

He was taken back to the main camp. But he was old and his blood was thin, and the wound gaped wide, so that he was near to death.

The First Ruler came to visit him and patted his back and said, “It is my fault, O Veteran General, that you have been hurt in the battle!”

“I am a soldier,” said the old man. “I am glad that I could serve Your Majesty. But now I am seventy-five, and I have lived long enough. Be careful of your own safety for the good of the state.”

These were his last words. He became unconscious and died that night.



A poem was written of him:

First among veterans stands Huang Zhong,
Who won great merit in the conquest of Shu.
Old, he still donned his coat of mail,
And laid his hand to the curving bow.
His valor was the talk of all the north,
Fear of his might maintained the west.

Tardy he bowed his snow-white head to death,
Fighting to the end—in very truth a hero.



Huang Zhong passed away, and the First Ruler looked on, very sad. He made Huang Zhong a grave in Chengdu and ordered an honorable burial there.

“My brave general is gone,” sighed he, “and the third of my five Tiger Generals, and I have been unable to avenge their deaths. It is very grievous!”

So the Emperor led the Imperial Guards to Xiaoting, where he summoned a great assembly. He divided his forces into eight parts ready for an attack by land and water. The marines were placed under Huang Quan, and he himself led the land forces. It was then the second month of the second year of the Manifest Might era (AD 221).

When Han Dang and Zhou Tai heard that the army of Shu was approaching, they marched toward it. When near, the two armies were arrayed. The two leaders of Wu rode out and saw the First Ruler riding out under the great standard with his staff about him. A silken umbrella splashed with gold was over his head; right and left were white banners, golden axes, and other insignia of an emperor.

Then Han Dang spoke, “Your Majesty is now the Ruler of Shu. Why do you risk your life in the battlefield? It would be most regrettable if any untoward event happened.”

The First Ruler pointed the finger of scorn at the speaker and said, "You rats of Wu bereft me of my Brother, and I have sworn that you shall not live with me under the same sky!"

"Who dares plunge in among the enemy?" asked Han Dang, turning to those in his train.

Marching General Xia Xun set his spear and rode to the front, and so did Zhang Bao with a roar gallop out to meet him. But this thunderous voice affrighted Xia Xun, and he sought to flee. Then Zhou Tai's brother, Zhou Ping, seeing that his colleague was panic-stricken, flourished his sword and rode out, too. At once Guan Xing dashed to the front. Zhang Bao roared again, thrusting at Xia Xun and unhorsing him. This disconcerted Zhou Ping and enfeebled his defense, so that Guan Xing speedily slew him with a slash. Then the two youths rode furiously at Han Dang and Zhou Tai. They sought refuge in their battle array.

"The tiger fathers have not begotten curs of sons," said the First Ruler with a sigh of satisfaction.

Then he waved his whip as a signal to fall on, and the Wu army suffered a great defeat. The Shu force of the eight divisions was irresistible as a river in flood, and the slaughter was immense.

Gan Ning was in his ship, ill, but he roused himself when he heard the armies of Shu had come, and mounted to go into the battle. Soon, he met a cohort of the Man soldiers. These warriors wore their hair loose and went barefoot. Their weapons were bows and crossbows and long spears and swords and axes, and they had shields to ward off blows. They were led by their own King Shamoke. His face was spotted with red as if splashed with

blood, and his eyes were green and big. He rushed among Gan Ning's troops wielding a spiked iron mace with bone pendants, and he had two bows slung at his belt. He was terrible to look upon.

Gan Ning recognized that he had no chance of victory against such a man and did not engage Shamohe, but turned his steed to flee. But as Gan Ning fled, Shamohe shot an arrow that pierced Gan Ning's skull. Wounded as he was, Gan Ning rode on to Fuchikou, but there he dismounted and sat under a big tree, where he died. On the tree were many hundreds of crows, and they gathered round the corpse as if to protect it.

The Prince of Wu was sore-grieved at the news of Gan Ning's death and had the remains buried honorably. Moreover, he raised a temple in Fuchikou to Gan Ning's memory.



Gan Ning was first of warriors in Wu,
With silken sails he stemmed the Great River's tide,
Right loyally he served his prince, and true,
He made two ill friends put their hate aside.
Light horse led he by night a camp to raid,
And first he warmed his soldiers with generous wine.
In his resting place the holy crows welcome guests,
And fragrant incense smolders at his shrine.

This victory gave the First Ruler possession of Xiaoting. But at the muster after the battle, Guan Xing did not appear. Search parties were sent to find him, and they went far and wide, beating the country around.

However, the dashing young soldier was only following his father's foe. When Guan Xing had gotten in among the army of Wu, he had caught sight of Pan Zhang, his especial enemy, and galloped in pursuit. In terror, Pan Zhang took to the hills and disappeared in one of the valleys.

In seeking him, Guan Xing lost his way and went to and fro till it grew dark without finding a way out. It was clear moonlight. Near midnight, he came to a farm, where he dismounted and knocked at the door. A venerable old man appeared and asked who he was.

"I am a leader of the army, and I have lost my way. I beg a meal, for I am starving," said Guan Xing.

The old man led him into a hall lit by many candles, and there he saw, in the family altar, a picture of Guan Yu. At once he began to wail and bowed before it.

"Why do you wail thus?" asked the old man.

"This is my father," said Guan Xing.

At this, the old man prostrated himself before his guest.

"Why should you treat my father with such respect?" asked Guan Xing.

"This place is sacred to his honored spirit. While he lived the people served him, and now that he is a spirit, should they not revere him the more? I have been waiting for the armies of Shu to avenge his death, and it is indeed the great fortune of the people that you have come."

Then the host brought forth wine and food and served his guest. Moreover, he unsaddled and fed his horse.

During the third watch, a knocking came at the door, and when the old man opened it, the visitor was no other than Pan Zhang, the general of Wu. He also asked shelter.

As Pan Zhang came in, Guan Xing recognized him and drew his sword, crying, "Stay, you ruffian! Do not flee!"

Pan Zhang turned to flee. But before he could turn, Guan Xing raised his sword. It fell, and Pan Zhang lay dead. Taking the heart-blood of his dead enemy, Guan Xing poured it in libation before the picture of his father. After that, he took possession of his father's Green-Dragon Saber, curved as the young moon. Having hacked off the head of his fallen enemy, he fastened it to his bridle. Then he took leave of his aged host, saddled his enemy's horse, and rode away toward his own camp.

The old man dragged the corpse of the dead commander outside and burned it.

Guan Xing had not gone very far when he heard the neighing of horses and soon met a troop led by Ma Zhong, one of Pan Zhang's generals, who was looking for his chief. Ma Zhong fell into a great rage when he saw the head of Pan Zhang swinging at the neck of Guan Xing's horse and beheld the famous sword in his hand. Ma Zhong galloped up furiously, and Guan Xing, who recognized an enemy of his late father, rushed to meet him. Just as he would have struck, however, Ma Zhong's three hundred troops galloped up to support their general, and Guan Xing was surrounded. He was in dire danger, but just opportunely came up a troop of cavalry led by his Cousin, Zhang Bao. At this, Ma Zhong, thinking discretion the better part, drew off his army and rode away.

The two Cousins pursued him. Before they had gone far, they met another force under Mi Fang and Fu Shiren, who had come out to seek Ma Zhong. The two bodies of soldiers met and fought, but the troops of Shu were too few for victory and drew off. Thence they made their way to headquarters in Xiaoting, where they told their adventures and presented the

head of Pan Zhang. The First Ruler was very pleased and rewarded all armed forces.

Ma Zhong went back and rejoined Han Dang and Zhou Tai. Then they collected their troops, many wounded, and stationed them in various points.

Ma Zhong, together with Mi Fang and Fu Shiren, marched to the riverbank and encamped. The night they arrived, many soldiers were groaning with the pain of their wounds.

Mi Fang, who was listening unbeknown to them, heard one of them say, "We are Jingzhou soldiers and victims of Lu Meng's vile machinations. If we had only remained under Liu Bei! Now he is Emperor and has set out to destroy Wu, and he will do it one day. But he has an especial grudge against Mi Fang and Fu Shiren. Why should we not kill these two and go over to Shu? They will think we have done well."

Another said, "Do not be hasty. We will do it presently when there is a chance."

Mi Fang started as he heard this. He told Fu Shiren, saying, "The troops are mutinous, and we ourselves are in danger. Ma Zhong is an object of especial hatred to the Ruler of Shu. Suppose we kill him and surrender. We can say we were compelled to give in to Wu, but as soon as the news of the Emperor came near, we wanted to get back."

"It will not do," said Fu Shiren. "If we go, they will kill us!"

"No! The Ruler of Shu is liberal and kind. And the heir, Liu Shan, is my nephew. They will surely not do any harm to a connection."

In the end, they decided to go. And at the third watch, they made their way into their chief's tent and stabbed him to death. Then they cut off his

head, and with their grisly trophy and a few dozen followers they set off for the camp of the Ruler of Shu.

They arrived at the outposts and were taken to see Zhang Nan and Feng Xi, to whom they told their tale. Next day, they went into the main camp and were admitted to the presence of the First Ruler, to whom they offered their trophy.

And they threw themselves on the ground and wept, saying, "We are not traitors. We were the victims of Lu Meng's wickedness. He said that Guan Yu was dead and tricked us into giving up the cities. We could not help surrendering. When we heard the Sacred Chariot had come, we slew Ma Zhong to satisfy your vengeance, and we implore forgiveness."

But the First Ruler was angry, and said, "I left Chengdu a long time ago. Why did you not come to confess your fault before? Now you find yourselves in danger, and so you come with this specious tale to try to save your lives. If I pardon you, how shall I look my Brother in the face when we meet beneath the Nine Golden Springs?"

Then he bade Guan Xing set up an altar to his father in the camp, and thereon, the First Ruler offered the head of Ma Zhong in sacrifice before the tablet of Guan Yu. This done, he had Guan Xing strip the two deserters and make them kneel before the altar. And presently with his own hand, Guan Xing hewed them in pieces as a sacrifice.

Presently, Zhang Bao came in and wailed before the First Ruler, saying, "The two enemies of my uncle have been slain, but when will vengeance be taken upon those of my father?"

"Do not grieve, my nephew," said the First Ruler, "I am going to lay waste the South Land and slay the whole of the curs that live there. I will assuredly capture the two murderers of your father, and you shall hack them to pieces as a sacrifice."

Zhang Bao went away, still weeping.

About this time, the fear of the First Ruler was very great among the people of the South Land, who stood in dread of him so that they grieved night and day. Han Dang and Zhou Tai were rather frightened, too, and they sent a report to their master of the assassination of Ma Zhong and what had befallen the assassins.

Then Sun Quan was distressed and called together his counselors. At this meeting, Bu Zhi proposed submission and self-humiliation for the sake of peace.

Said he, "There were five persons—Lu Meng, Pan Zhang, Ma Zhong, Mi Fang, and Fu Shiren—whom Liu Bei had a grudge against, and they are all dead. Now the objects of his hate are the murderers of Zhang Fei: Fan Jiang and Zhang Da. Why not send back Zhang Fei's head, and these two assassins, and give up Jingzhou and restore Lady Sun and ask for peace and alliance against Wei? This will make the army of Shu retire, and we shall have peace."

This proposal seemed good. So the head of Zhang Fei was enclosed in a sandalwood box; Fan Jiang and Zhang Da were bound and put in a cage-cart. All these were sent, with letters, by the hand of Cheng Bing to the camp at Xiaoting.

The First Ruler was about to march farther east when they told him that a messenger had come from the South Land and what he had brought.

The Ruler struck his forehead with both hands, saying, "This is the direct gift of Heaven through my youngest Brother's spirit."

He bade Zhang Bao prepare an altar whereon to sacrifice the heads of his father's assassins. When he opened the box and saw the fresh features of Zhang Fei, he broke into wailing for the dead. Then, the son hewed Fan Jiang and Zhang Da in pieces and offered them upon the altar.

But this sacrifice did not appease the First Ruler's anger, and he still desired to destroy Wu. Whereupon, Ma Liang remonstrated.

"Your enemies are now all dead: you are avenged. Wu has sent a high officer with large concessions and awaits your reply."

But the First Ruler angrily replied, "The one I would grind to pieces is Sun Quan. To act as he proposes and enter into alliance would be treachery to my two Brothers and a breach of our Oath. Now I will exterminate Wu, and Wei shall follow."

He wished also to put the messenger to death to annihilate all feelings with Wu, but he relented when his officers insistently interceded.

Poor Cheng Bing ran off terrified, glad to escape with life. He went back and told the Prince of Wu how implacable his enemy seemed.

Said he, "The Ruler of Shu, not listening to words of peace, was determined to level Wu before attacking Wei. Those under him protested in vain. What is to be done?"

Sun Quan was frightened and bewildered.

Seeing this, Kan Ze stepped forward and said, "Since there is a sky-supporting pillar, why not use it?"

"Whom do you refer to?" asked Sun Quan.

"You once had perfect confidence in Zhou Yu, and he was followed by Lu Su, equally able. Lu Meng succeeded and you pinned your faith upon

him. Though now Lu Meng is dead, yet there is Lu Xun. And he is quite near, in Jingzhou. He is well-known to be a scholar, but really he is a bold and capable man, no whit inferior to Zhou Yu, in my opinion. The plan that broke Guan Yu was his. If anyone can destroy Shu, it is he. If he fails, then I will stand the same punishment as may be his.”

“If you had not spoken thus, my whole scheme might have gone amiss,” said Sun Quan.

“Lu Xun is a student,” said Zhang Zhao. “He is no match for Liu Bei. You may not use him.”

Gu Yong also said, “Lu Xun is too young and too inexperienced. I fear he will not be obeyed, and that will be unfortunate.”

Bu Zhi added, “Lu Xun is well enough to control a region, but he is not fit for a big matter.”

Kan Ze got desperate, shouting, “It is the only hope. I will guarantee him with the lives of all my house!”

“I know he is able,” said Sun Quan, “and I have now made up my mind he is the man. Gentlemen, that is enough.”

Lu Xun was called home. Lu Xun was originally named Lu Yi. He was a native of Wujun in Wu, grandson of Lu Jun, who was Commander of the City Gates of the Han, and son of Lu Yu, Commander of Jiujiang. He was eight spans in height, with a beautiful face like the finest jade.

When Lu Xun arrived at court and made his bow, Sun Quan said to him, “I wish to send you in supreme command of all the forces against Shu.”

“Sir, you have numerous old and tried officers under your command. I am very young and not at all clever,” replied Lu Xun.

“Kan Ze goes bail for you and pledges his whole house. Moreover, I know your abilities. You must be Commander-in-Chief and may not refuse the appointment.”

“But what will happen if the officers do not support me?”

“Here is authority!” said Sun Quan, taking his own sword from his side and giving it to Lu Xun. “Slay the disobedient and report afterwards.”

“I am grateful for this proof of confidence, but I dare not accept forthwith. I pray you assemble all the officers and confer the office upon me in their presence.”

Said Kan Ze, “The ancient fashion was to set up a platform and thereon present to the leader-elect a white yak’s tail and a golden ax with the seal of office and commission. Thereafter, his dignity and the reverence due from others were beyond all question. It would be well, O Prince, to follow the old rule. Choose a good day and appoint Lu Xun before all the world, and no one will refuse support.”

An altar was begun at once. They worked at it day and night, and as soon as it was finished, a great assembly was called. Then, Lu Xun was requested to ascend and make his bow on receiving his appointment as Commander-in-Chief, General of the Right Army, General Who Guards the West, and Lord of Fenglou. The sword of authority and the seal of office were presented. His powers extended over the six territories and the eighty-one counties of the South Land, over the forces in Jingzhou and Wu.

And in charging him, Sun Quan said, “Domestic affairs belong to me; outer affairs are under your direction.”

Lu Xun then descended. He chose Xu Sheng and Ding Feng as commanders of his guards, and the army lost no time in taking the field.

The various dispositions of horsemen and footmen and navy were made, and dispatches were sent to the outlying commanders.

When the dispatch reached Han Dang and Zhou Tai, who were camping near Xiaoting, they were alarmed, saying, "Why did the Prince appoint a mere bookish student to the commandership of all armed forces?"

So when the new Commander-in-Chief came, they showed their discontent by a lack of hearty support. Lu Xun went to his tent to receive the reports, and there, the majority of the officers manifested only sullen respect and unwilling deference.

Then Lu Xun addressed them, saying, "By order of my superior I am Commander-in-Chief, and my commission is to destroy Shu. You, gentlemen, all know the ordinary military rules, and you would do well to obey them. The law is no respecter of persons, as those who disobey will find out. Do not need to regret when it is too late."

They nodded in sullen acquiescence.

Then Zhou Tai said, "There is Sun Huan, nephew of our Prince. He is surrounded at Yiling and is short of food. I venture to request you to send relief to him and get him out, so that the Prince's heart may be comforted."

"I know all about him. His soldiers are faithful, and he can easily maintain his position. There is no need to go to his aid. When Shu is broken, he will be free to come out."

They all sniggered as they left the tent, and Han Dang did not fail to express his contempt for the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief.

"This will be the end of Wu," said he to his colleague. "Did you note what he said?"

"I tried him just to see what he would do," said Zhou Tai. "You see he had no plan ready. He destroys Shu indeed!"

Next day, general orders were issued for defense and prohibitions against giving battle, which provoked more laughter at the incapable pedant, as they thought of him in command, and secret resolves to disobey. Moreover, the officers showed their contempt by a general disregard of orders.

So once more, Lu Xun assembled them and said, "You know I am in command. Yet the recent orders for defense have been disregarded. Why?"

Then Han Dang spoke up, "Some of us followed General Sun Ce when he first subdued the South Land. Others won fame in destroying rebels or in following the present Prince in his campaigns. All of us have donned our armors and gripped our weapons in many bloody fights. Now, Sir, you have been placed in supreme command to repulse Shu, and there should be some plan of campaign made for us at once, some dispositions of our forces, and some definite advance toward that end. Instead of that, we are told to strengthen our defenses and are forbidden to fight. What are we to wait for? Will Heaven destroy our opponents for us? We are not afraid to die. Why is our keenness left to be eaten away and our energies wasted in idleness?"

All the others applauded this speech and cried that the speaker had expressed their own ideas. "General Han Dang just says what we think: let us fight a decisive battle," they cried.

The new leader waited till the uproar had subsided; then drawing his sword, he shouted, "That I am a student is true. But I have been entrusted with a great task, a task for which the Prince of Wu considers me competent and for the performance of which I am prepared to bear all the responsibilities. As for you, you will do well to act on the defensive as I ordered and not allow yourselves to be led astray into any attacks. And I shall put the disobedient to death!"

This speech had little effect, and they dispersed grumbling and murmuring.

Meanwhile, the Ruler of Shu had made a long chain of forty camps from Xiaoting to the borders of the River Lands, spreading out two hundred miles. These base camps looked very imposing with their fluttering banners by day and their fires at night.

Then the spies came in and reported: "Wu appointed Lu Xun as Commander-in-Chief. Lu Xun ordered his commanders to defend strategic points and not to engage in battle."

"What sort of a man is this Lu Xun?" said the First Ruler.

"He is a scholar among the people of Wu, and, though young, he is very talented," replied Ma Liang. "His schemes are very deep. He was the author of the villainous and crafty plan of attack on Jingzhou."

"His crafty scheme caused the deaths of my Brothers. But now I shall have him!" said the First Ruler angrily.

He gave orders to advance. But Ma Liang ventured to remonstrate and dissuade him.

"Be very careful," said he. "This Lu Xun is no whit inferior to Zhou Yu."

"I have grown old in the field," said the Emperor. "Don't you think me a match for this callow youth?"

He confirmed the order to go forward, and they attacked passes and fords and redoubts wherever they were.

Han Dang notified his chief of the movement of the Shu army, and Lu Xun, still rather dubious of the strict obedience to his orders, hastened to the point of danger. He found Han Dang on a hill surveying the enemy's force, which advanced like a great wave. Amidst the army they saw a wide yellow umbrella, and Han Dang pointed it out.

"That must be Liu Bei," said he. "I should like to kill him!"

"Careful!" said Lu Xun. "So far, he has scored victory after victory, and his soldiers are very keen and confident. Maintain a careful defense on high grounds and do not go out to battle. If you do, you will lose. Impress that upon your officers and soldiers and make them understand the strategy, while you follow the enemy's moves. They are hastening into the wide open space, and I do not wish to hinder them. Nor will I accept any challenge to battle, but wait till they have moved their camps into the forest and among the trees. Then I shall have a scheme ready."

Han Dang agreed so far as words went, but in his heart he was still ill-conditioned. When the Shu army drew near, a small force came to challenge. They shouted all sorts of abuse and hurled reproaches to put their opponents to shame, but Lu Xun took no notice and bade his troops stop their ears. He would not allow them to go out to battle, but he went from fort to redoubt, encouraging the soldiers to remain carefully on the defensive.

The First Ruler's heart burned within him at this refusal to come out to battle.

Said Ma Liang, "Lu Xun is a deep and crafty fellow. He recognizes the disadvantages of Your Majesty's troops in being far from their base, and from spring to autumn he will not come out to fight till some move occurs that he may profit by."

“What ruse can he be contemplating?” said the First Ruler. “The real fact is that he is afraid. Their army has suffered nothing but defeat time and again. They dare not meet us.”

One day, the leader of the van, Feng Xi, memorialized the First Ruler, saying, “The weather is scorching, and the troops are camped in the full glare of sun. Beside, water is scarce and hard to get.”

Thereupon, orders were given to move the camps into the shade of the forest close by and near the streams till the summer heats should have passed. This order given, Feng Xi moved the camp to a retired and shady spot for his troops.

Ma Liang said, “If our soldiers move, the enemy will rush out on us and we shall be hard set.”

“I will provide for that,” said the First Ruler. “I will send Hu Ban with ten thousand of our inferior troops to camp near their lines. But I will choose eight thousand veterans and place them in ambush. Hu Ban will have orders to flee before the soldiers of Wu and lead them into my ambush if they come out, and I will cut off their retreat. We ought to capture this precocious youth.”

“A genius in plans, a marvel of prevision!” cried all those about him as this plan was unfolded. “None of us can approach you in cleverness.”

So they felicitated their ruler.

But Ma Liang said, “They say the Prime Minister is on a tour of inspection of the defenses in the eastern portion of Shu, seeing that they are in good order against any attack on the part of Wei. Why not send him a sketch of your present dispositions of troops and ask his opinion?”

“I also am not entirely ignorant of the art of war, and I see no reason to seek advice,” was the cold reply.

“There is an old saying about hearing both sides,” said Ma Liang.

“Well, then you go round to all the camps and make a map and take it to the Prime Minister. If he finds any fault, you may come and tell me.”

So Ma Liang went, while the First Ruler busied himself with getting his army into shelter from the fierce heat of summer.

His move was no secret, and the scouts soon told Han Dang and Zhou Tai, who rejoiced at the news and soon went to tell Lu Xun.

“All the enemies’ forty camps have been moved into the shade. Now, Sir, you can attack!” said they.

That was not a bad plan, an ambush to set,
Thus thought he his chieftest opponent to get.

Whether Lu Xun acted upon the suggestion of his subordinates will be seen in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XX

CHAPTER 84

LU XUN BURNS ALL CONSECUTIVE CAMPS; ZHUGE LIANG PLANS THE EIGHT-ARRAY MAZE.

The last chapter closed with the report that the First Ruler had shifted camp in search of cool shade, and the news was very welcome to Lu Xun. He went forthwith to assure himself of the truth of the report and observe the new position. A level plain lay at his feet, whereon he saw something short of ten thousand Shu troops, the greater part of whom appeared invalids. On the banner of their leader he read the name, "Van Leader Hu Ban."

"We consider these troops children," said Zhou Tai. "Let me and General Han Dang go out and smite them. I will give the formal guarantee of victory."

The Commander-in-Chief made no reply, but remained gazing out before him.

Presently, he said, "It seems to me that an air of slaughter is rising over there from that valley. Surely there is an ambush there. These poor troops in the foreground are nothing but a bait. No, gentlemen, do not leave your positions."

Those who heard this took it only as another proof of the imbecility of their pedant commander.

Next day, Hu Ban's soldiers approached closer and challenged to battle, swaggering about and brandishing their weapons and shouting volleys of abuse without end. They manifested contempt by throwing off their armor and clothing and moving to and fro with the utmost

carelessness, bare bodies and naked forms, blatantly unready to fight. Some even sat or lay asleep.

Xu Sheng and Ding Feng came to the Commander-in-Chief's tent to complain, saying, "Those Shu soldiers despise us so much. Let us go out and punish them!"

But Lu Xun only smiled, saying, "You see things from the viewpoint of brute courage. You seem not to know the principles of war laid down by Sun Zi and Wu Qi. This display is only meant to entice us into fighting. You will see the pretense yourselves in about three days."

"In three days the change of camp will be complete, and the enemy will be too strongly posted for our success," said they.

"I am just letting them move their camp."

Xu Sheng and Ding Feng left the tent, also sniggering.

But on the third day, the officers were assembled at a lookout point, whence they saw that the army under Hu Ban had left.

"There is still a deadly look over the valley," said Lu Xun, pointing to the hills. "Liu Bei will soon appear."

Very soon, they saw a whole army, all well-accoutered, pass across the field, escorting the First Ruler. And the sight took away all their courage.

"That is why I would not listen to those of you who wanted to fight Hu Ban," said Lu Xun. "Now that the ambush has been withdrawn, we can settle them in about ten days."

"The proper time to attack was when they began to transfer their camp. Now they are fully established with encampments stretching two hundred miles. Having spent seven or eight months in strengthening where they might be attacked, will it not be difficult to destroy them?" said they.

“I see you do not understand how to carry on war. This man Liu Bei is a capable and crafty man. When he first started on this expedition, his methods were of the best, and he kept them so for a long time, so we have had to avoid him. When his troops are worn out and his thoughts cease to be clear, that will be our day to attack.”

At last they agreed with their chief.



The general discoursed on war,
According to the book;
Right craftily the bait for whales
Was put upon the hook.
When kingdoms three were carved out,
Though famous men were many,
Lu Xun the hero of Wu
Stands at least high as any.



Lu Xun had already had the plan whereby the Shu army was to be crushed, and at this stage he wrote to the Prince of Wu in full detail, even naming a day for the victory.

“We have found another remarkably able leader,” said the Prince, “and I have no further anxiety. They all said he was a useless pedant, and only I knew better. Reading this letter shows him nothing at all of a pedant.”

Then the Prince of Wu mustered the remainder of his soldiers to hold in reserve.

Meanwhile, the First Ruler had sent orders to hasten the marines down the river and take up stations along the banks deep in the territory of Wu.

However, Huang Quan spoke against this, saying, “It is easy enough for the ships to go down, but how about returning? Let me make the first advance, and Your Majesty may follow. That will make it more than probable that nothing will go wrong.”

“Those Wu enemies are afraid,” objected the First Ruler, “and I want to make a dash at them. Where is the difficulty?”

Though many others spoke against the proposal, the First Ruler did not give up the notion of going into the forefront of the attack. Then, dividing the army into two portions, he placed Huang Quan in command on the North of the Great River to keep a watch on Wei, while he commanded on the South of the Great River. They made encampments and stations along the bank.

The spies of Wei duly reported these doings to the Ruler of Wei: “Shu marches against Wu, erecting forty base camps along two hundred miles of woods and hills. Moreover, the Ruler of Shu places Huang Quan in command of the North of the Great River. Huang Quan’s marines patrol as far as thirty miles daily. We do not know their intention.”

The Ruler of Wei laughed aloud when he heard the details of the long line of camps and the encampments among the trees and all this.

“Liu Bei is going to be defeated,” said he.

“How do you know?” asked his courtiers.

“Because Liu Bei does not know how to wage war. How can he beat off an enemy along a front of two hundred miles? The maxims of war forbid to camp in open plains, among marshes, amid precipitous heights and

obstacles. He will be defeated at the hand of Lu Xun, and we shall hear of it in about ten days.”

His officers felt more than doubtful and entreated their master to prepare an army to guard against Huang Quan and to attack Shu if the occasion would allow.

But the Ruler of Wei replied, “I do not plan to attack Shu. If successful, Lu Xun will lead all his force westward into the West River Land, and the South Land will be defenseless. I shall pretend to send an army to help. I shall send them in three divisions, and I shall overcome Wu easily.”

They all bowed acquiescence and approval. Then orders went out appointing Cao Ren to lead an army out to Ruxu, Cao Xiu to take a second out to Dongkou, and Cao Zhen to command a third aiming at Nanjun, and the three armies were to combine on a given date for a sudden attack on Wu. The Ruler of Wei would himself bring up the reinforcement in this southern campaign.

Having reached Chengdu, Ma Liang lost no time in seeing the Prime Minister and presenting the plan of the armies as they were in the field.

Said Ma Liang, “Now, the forces are on both sides of the Great River, extending along a front of two hundred miles, with forty stations, each beside a mountain stream or in a pleasantly shaded forest. At our lord’s command, I prepared this map, and he sent me to ask your opinion.”

“Who advised such an arrangement? He ought to be put to death, whoever it was!” cried Zhuge Liang, tapping the table at his side.

“It is entirely our lord’s own work. No other had any hand in it,” said Ma Liang.

“The life and energy of the Hans are done indeed,” said Zhuge Liang sorrowfully. “Our lord has committed those very faults which the rules of the Art of War lay down as to be particularly avoided. The camps are made where free movement is impossible, and nothing can save him if the enemy use fire. Beside, what defense is possible along a two-hundred-mile front? Disaster is at hand, and Lu Xun sees it all, which explains his obstinate refusal to come out into the open. Go back as quickly as you can, and tell our lord that this will not do, that it must be changed at once.”

“But if I am too late—if Wu has already attacked and won—what then?”

“The enemy will not dare to follow up their victory by a march on Chengdu. So this capital is secure.”

“Why will they not?”

“Wei is behind their back: that is why. Our lord will be compelled to shelter in Baidicheng. I have already placed ten thousand troops in hiding at Fishbelly Creek.”

“Have you? I have been up and down that creek three or four times without seeing a soldier. I do not see the reason of telling lies to me,” said Ma Liang.

“You will see. Do not ask so many questions.”

With the precious instructions which he had persuaded Zhuge Liang to draw up, Ma Liang hastened back to the imperial camp, while Zhuge Liang went to the capital to prepare a relief expedition.

The soldiers of Shu had become slack and idle and no longer maintained adequate defense, wherefore Lu Xun perceived that his moment had arrived, and called his generals to his tent to receive orders.

“There has been no fighting since I received our lord’s command. I have spent the time in acquiring a knowledge of the enemy. As a preliminary operation, I want to capture a camp on the south bank. Who volunteers?”

Out stepped Han Dang and Zhou Tai and Ling Tong, all three at once, each crying that he wanted to be sent. But they were sent back. The Commander-in-Chief did not want any of them.

Then he called up the junior general, Chunyu Dan, and said, “You will take the fourth camp on the south side. The commander of that post is Fu Tong. You may have five thousand troops. I shall support you.”

Chunyu Dan took the order and was gone.

Then Lu Xun summoned Xu Sheng and Ding Feng and said, “Each of you will take three thousand troops and bivouac two miles from the camp, so that if Chunyu Dan is repulsed and pursued, you can rescue him.”

Chunyu Dan marched between the lights and reached the camp he was to capture just after the third watch. His drums rolled, and he attacked at once. The defenders came out led by Fu Tong, who, spear ready to thrust, rode straight toward the leader of the attack and forced him back. Suddenly, there arose the roll of other drums, and a cohort under Zhao Rong barred the way. Chunyu Dan turned off along another road, escaping with loss of many troops.

But he was not yet safe. Some distance farther he ran against the Man tribesmen leader Shamoke. However, Chunyu Dan avoided him also and went on his way, pursued now by three parties. Soon he reached the spot

two miles from the camp, and here the two leaders of Wu, Xu Sheng and Ding Feng, who had been placed ready to afford succor, came out and stopped the pursuit. When the enemy had retired, Chunyu Dan was escorted back to camp.

He was wounded, and with the arrow still undrawn, he appeared before Lu Xun and apologized for his failure.

“It was no fault of yours,” said the Commander-in-Chief. “I wanted to test the force of our enemy. My plan of attack is quite ready.”

“The enemy is very strong and will not be easily overcome,” said Xu Sheng and Ding Feng. “We have now suffered great loss to no purpose.”

“This plan of mine would not hoodwink Zhuge Liang, but happily he is not here. His absence will allow me to score a great success.”

Then he summoned his generals to receive orders: “Zhu Ran is to lead the marine force. He is to advance next day’s afternoon, when the southeast wind will serve. His ships are laden with reeds and straw, which are to be used as ordered. Han Dang is to attack the north bank, Zhou Tai the south. Each soldier, in addition to his weapons, is to carry a bundle of straw or reeds, with sulfur and saltpeter hidden therein, and each has a piece of tinder. They are to advance, and, when they reach the Shu camps, they are to start a conflagration. But they are to burn only alternate camps, twenty in all, leaving the others untouched. They are to advance and pursue the enemy until they capture Liu Bei.”

The leaders received the orders and so set out.

The First Ruler was in his own camp, pondering over a plan to destroy the armies of Wu, when suddenly the staff that bore the great standard in front

of his own tent fell over and lay on the ground. There was no wind to account for this, so he turned to Cheng Jin and asked what it might portend.

“It means only one thing: the troops of Wu will raid the camp tonight,” said Cheng Jin.

“They will not dare after the slaughter of yesterday.”

“But suppose that was only a reconnaissance. What then?”

Just then a report came in that some troops of Wu could be seen, very far off, going along the hills eastward.

“They are soldiers meant to put us in confusion,” said the First Ruler. “Tell the generals not to move, but let Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, with a small, mounted force, go out to reconnoiter.”

It was dusk when these two returned, and they then reported: “Fire is seen among the camps on the north bank.”

The Emperor hastily bade Guan Xing go to rescue the north camps and Zhang Bao to the south to find out what was really happening. And they started.

About the middle of the first watch, the wind got up and blew strong from the east. Then fire arose from the camp on the left of the First Ruler’s own. He was starting to extinguish this flame when another fire began in the camp on his right. With the aid of the strong breeze, both fires became fierce, and soon the trees caught. A confused roar showed the gathering strength of the fire. The soldiers of the burning camps were rushing into the First Ruler’s own camp to escape the fire, and in their confusion they trampled on each other so that many died.

Behind them came the troops of Wu, bent on slaughter. Ignorant of how many they might be, the First Ruler mounted and dashed for Feng Xi’s camp, but that also was in flames, which seemed to rise to the very sky. By

this time flames were rising from both sides of the river, so that everything was as visible as by day.

Feng Xi leaped to his horse and fled, followed by a band of his mounted troops. This small force ran against the soldiers of Wu under Xu Sheng. A melee ensued, whereupon the First Ruler turned and galloped west. Xu Sheng then left Feng Xi and went in pursuit. Presently, the Emperor saw a party of soldiers in the way and became greatly alarmed.

This was Ding Feng's army, and the First Ruler was between two foes. In his terror, he saw no possibility of safety; no road was open. Just at this moment, another cohort broke through to his side and rescued him. The leader was Zhang Bao, and he led the Imperial Guards, who fled, taking the First Ruler with them. As they marched along, they fell in with another force of Shu; the leader was Fu Tong, and he joined up with them.

The Wu army was still following when the fugitives reached Saddle Hill. The two leaders, Zhang Bao and Fu Tong, urged their lord to go to the top of this and out of immediate danger. Soon, Lu Xun arrived with his army and began to surround the hill. Zhang Bao and Fu Tong held the road up the hill and kept the enemy from ascending. From the summit could be seen flames all around, and the First Ruler witnessed the corpses of his soldiers lay about in heaps or floated in the streams.

Next day, the soldiers of Wu set themselves to igniting the hill. The First Ruler's remaining escort fled for their lives like rats, and their lord was in despair. Suddenly he saw a general followed by a dozen horsemen cutting an alley through and coming up the hill. As he drew nearer, the Emperor recognized Guan Xing.

Guan Xing quickly leapt down, prostrated himself, and said, "Your Majesty, the fire is gaining all round, and this place is not safe. I request you to try to reach Baidicheng, and as many as possible will gather there."

“Who will dare stay behind to keep off the enemy?” said the First Ruler.

Fu Tong volunteered, saying, “I will fight to death to guard the rear!”

It was dusk when they started. Guan Xing led the way, Zhang Bao protected the First Ruler, and Fu Tong guarded the rear. They got their lord safely down the hill and away. As soon as the troops of Wu noticed the flight, they pressed forward, each anxious to gain kudos by the capture of the Emperor’s person. Great armies of Wu, blotting out the sky and hiding the earth, went westward in pursuit.

The First Ruler ordered his soldiers to make fires of their clothing and other things in the road so as to hinder pursuit.

Zhu Ran marched up from the river to try to intercept the flight, and the noise of his drums was terrifying.

The First Ruler thought there was no possibility of escape from this force, and cried, “This is the end!”

His two nephews dashed to the front to try to cut a way through, but returned wounded and bleeding. And the noise of the pursuers came constantly nearer as they found their way along the valleys. About the first glimpse of dawn, the case seemed quite desperate.

But just at the worst, they saw Zhu Ran’s soldiers suddenly begin to break up and scatter, tumbling into streams and rolling down precipices. Soon, the reason was evident: a fearsome general leading a cohort came to their relief.

Once again, the First Ruler was rescued from pressing danger, and this time, the rescuer was Zhao Yun. He had been in Jiangzhou, and news of the straits of his lord had reached him there. He had set out forthwith. Then he had seen the glow of the flames and had marched toward it. And thus he

had arrived just at the moment to save his master when danger was most imminent.

As soon as Lu Xun heard that Zhao Yun had appeared, he ordered his troops to stop pursuit and retire. Zhao Yun, happening upon Zhu Ran, engaged him forthwith and, in the first encounter, slew Zhu Ran with a spear thrust. And so the army of Wu was dispersed and retired, and the First Ruler got safely to the wall of Baidicheng.

But on the way thither, his thoughts went back to his companions in misfortune, and he inquired after them anxiously.

“Though I am safe, how about the other generals and soldiers?” asked the First Ruler.

“The pursuers are close upon us, and we cannot wait for anything,” said Zhao Yun. “I wish Your Majesty to get into the city as quickly as possible. While you are reposing yourself, we may try to rescue some of the leaders.”

When the First Ruler entered Baidicheng, he was in sore straits, only having about a hundred men left.



A poet wrote concerning this victory of Lu Xun:

He grips the spear, he kindles fire, the camps are
swept away;

Liu Bei to the White Emperor City flees, lonely and
sad today.

But Lu Xun's meteoric fame now shoots through Shu
and Wei,

For bookish people the Prince of Wu has naught but
good to say.

Fu Tong, who commanded the rearguard, was surrounded by the enemy in
all eight directions.

Ding Feng shouted to him, “You had better surrender! Many soldiers
of Shu have fallen, more have surrendered, and your lord is a prisoner. You
have no hope against us with your scanty force.”

But Fu Tong replied, “Shall I, a servant of Han, give in to the curs of
Wu?”

Undaunted, he rode at his opponents and fought many bouts. But his
strength and valor availed naught. Struggle as he would, he could not make
his way out. And so he fell among his enemies.



A poem celebrates his valiancy:

Wu, at Yiling, strove with Shu,
Flames, not swords, used crafty Lu Xun.
Worthy of a place among Han generals
Is the hero named Fu Tong.

The Minister Cheng Jin, having got clear of the battle, rode swiftly to the
riverbank and called to the marines to join in the battle. They landed, but

were soon scattered.

One of Cheng Jin's generals shouted to him: "The soldiers of Wu are upon us. Let us find a way to escape, Libationer Cheng Jin!"

But Cheng Jin shouted back, "Since I first followed my lord, I have never yet turned my back upon the foe!"

The enemy surrounded Cheng Jin, and, as he could do no more, he took his sword and slew himself.



Noble among the warriors of Shu was Cheng Jin,
He kept his sword for the service of his prince.
When danger pressed near he wavered not,
Wherefore his fame remains forever bright.



Now Hu Ban and Zhang Nan had been besieging Yiling. Then came Feng Xi and told of the need of their lord, and they led off their army to rescue him. Whereupon Sun Huan was set free as Lu Xun had foretold would happen.

As soon as Sun Huan was free, he set off in pursuit of Hu Ban, Zhang Nan, and Feng Xi. These two marched until they met an army of Wu face to face, and so they were between two forces. A desperate battle was fought, and both Zhang Nan and Feng Xi perished therein.



Feng Xi was loyal without peer;

Zhang Nan was righteous, few have equaled him.
In battle on the flaming shore they died,
And the histories record their deeds.



Hu Ban broke through. He was pursued, but he luckily fell in with Zhao Yun and got safely to Baidicheng.

The Man tribesman King Shamohe was fleeing from the battlefield when he met Zhou Tai, who slew him after a short fight.

The two Shu generals Du Lu and Liu Ning surrendered to Wu, as did many soldiers. Of the stores and weapons in the camps of Shu, nothing was saved.

When the story of the disaster to Shu reached the South Land, and with it the report that the First Ruler had been killed in battle, Lady Sun gave way to wild grief. She rode down to the riverbank and, gazing westward, wept and lamented. Then she threw herself into the stream and was drowned.



Posterity erected a temple on the shore called “The Shrine of the Bold Beauty,” and one who described it wrote a poem:

The Ruler, defeated, fled to Baidicheng,
Through thunderous tiding, Lady Sun committed
suicide.

Today the water still flows by the carved stone
To show where and why this heroine died.

There could be no question that this exploit brought tremendous glory to Lu Xun. Anxious to push his advantage as far as possible, Lu Xun led his exultant army westward. But as he drew near to Kui Pass, he suddenly pulled up his horse, remarking that he saw an aura of death about the mountainside in front.

“We may not yet advance farther. I suspect an ambush.”

So they retreated three miles and camped in a wide-open space. The army was arrayed ready against any sudden attack. Meanwhile, scouts were sent out. They returned reporting no soldiers. Lu Xun doubted and went up to the summit of a hill whence he could see over the country. The aura was still visible to him, and so he dispatched other people to spy. But he received the same report: not a soldier, not a horse.

Still, as the sun got lower and lower in the west, he saw the same appearance accentuated, and he began to feel grave doubts. He sent a confidant to look once more.

This man came back, saying, “There is not a single soldier, but I have noticed on the riverbank nearly a hundred heaps of boulders.”

The Commander-in-Chief, still doubting, called in several of the natives and questioned them about the stones.

“Who put them there? Why do they look so ghastly?” asked Lu Xun.

“We do not know. This place is called Fishbelly Creek. When Zhuge Liang was going west into the River Lands, he came along here with a lot of soldiers and heaped up the boulders like that on the sandy beach. We

have seen vapors rising from the boulders; they seemed to come from inside them.”

Lu Xun decided to go and look at these boulders himself. So he rode off, with a small escort. Looked down upon from a declivity, the stones were evidently arranged with a design related to the eight points of the compass. There were doors and door-sills and lintels.

“This looks likely to drive a person out of his senses,” he said. “I wonder whether it is any good.”

They rode down with intent to examine the mysterious arrangement more closely and went in among the stones.

Presently one of the escort called attention to the increasing darkness and said, “The sun is setting. We ought to be returning to camp.”

But as Lu Xun glanced round to look for an exit, a sudden squall came on, and the dust whirled up, obscuring both sky and earth. And in the swirl, the stones reared themselves up like steep mountains, pointed like swords, and the dust and sand shaped themselves into waves and hillocks, one behind the other. The roar of the boiling river was as the drums before a battle.

“This is some trick of Zhuge Liang,” said Lu Xun in a scared voice, “and I have been caught.”

He would go out, but he had quite lost his way and could find no exit. As he stopped to consider what he should do, an old man suddenly appeared.

The old man said, “Does the General wish to go out?”

“I greatly desire that you would pilot me out, O Elder!” replied he.

Leaning on his staff, the old man led the way and with quiet dignity conducted Lu Xun outside. He had no difficulty in finding his way and

paused not a single instant. When they were once again on the slope, Lu Xun asked his aged guide who he was.

“I am Zhuge Liang’s father-in-law. My name is Huang Chenyan. My son-in-law placed these boulders here as you see them, and he said they represented the Eight-Array Maze. They are like eight doors, and according to the scheme are named: Gate of Rest, Gate of Life, Gate of Injury, Gate of Obstruction, Gate of Prospect, Gate of Death, Gate of Surprise, and Gate of Openings.

“They are capable of infinite mutations and would be equal to a hundred thousand soldiers. As he was leaving, he told me that if any leader of Wu became mazed in them, I was not to conduct him outside. From a precipice nearby, I saw you, General, enter in at the Gate of Death. As I guessed you were ignorant of the scheme, I knew you would be entangled. But I am of a good disposition and could not bear that you should be entrapped without possibility of escape, so I came to guide you to the Gate of Life.”

“Have you studied this matter, Sir?” asked Lu Xun.

“The variations are inexhaustible, and I could not learn them all.”

Lu Xun dismounted, bowed low before the old man, and then rode away.



The famous poet Du Fu wrote some verses which run something like this:

Planner of three kingdoms, no small praise

Is his—Inventor of the Eight Arrays.

And for those famous boulders, on the river’s brim,

Firm was set the denouncement of Wu's whim.



Lu Xun took his way to his camp in deep thought.

“This Zhuge Liang is well named Sleeping Dragon,” said he. “I am not his equal.”

Then, to the amazement of all, Lu Xun gave orders to retire. The officers ventured to remonstrate, seeing that they had been so successful.

“General, you have utterly broken the enemy, and Liu Bei is shut up in one small city. It seems the time to smite, and yet you retire because you have come across a mysterious arrangement of stones.”

“I am not afraid of the stones, and it is not on their account that I retire. But I fear Cao Pi. He is no less resourceful than his father, and when he hears I am marching into Shu, he will certainly attack us. How could I return then?”

The homeward march began.

On the second day, the scouts brought a report: “Three Wei generals with three armies are debouching at three different points and moving toward the borders of Wu—Cao Ren to Ruxu, Cao Xiu to Dongkou, and Cao Zhen to Nanjun. Their intentions are unclear.”

“Just as I thought,” said Lu Xun. “But I am ready for them.”

“And now the west is mine,” the victor thought,
But danger from the north discretion taught.

The story of the retreat will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XX

CHAPTER 85

THE FIRST RULER CONFIDES HIS SON TO A GUARDIAN; THE PRIME MINISTER CALMLY SETTLES FIVE ATTACKS.

In summer, the sixth month of the second year of Manifest Might (AD 221), Lu Xun destroyed the army of Shu at Yiling. The First Ruler sought refuge in Baidicheng, of which Zhao Yun then undertook the defense.

When Ma Liang returned only to find his lord defeated, he was more distressed than he could say. He announced what Zhuge Liang had said concerning the plans.

The First Ruler sighed, saying, "If I had listened to the Prime Minister's advice, the defeat would not have happened. Now how can I face the officials if I return to my capital?"

So he promulgated a command to change the guesthouse into the Palace of Eternal Peace. He was deeply grieved when they told him Feng Xi, Cheng Jin, Fu Tong, Zhang Nan, King Shamoke, and many of his generals had died loyally in his cause.

Next, he heard people say: "Huang Quan, who had been given command of the army on the north bank, has given in to Wei. Your Majesty should deliver his whole family to the authority and hold them responsible for the renegade."

But the First Ruler only said, "The army was quite cut off by Wu from the south bank, and he had no alternative but to surrender. Really, I betrayed him, not he me. Why should I take vengeance on his family?"

So he continued the issue of the renegade's pay to his family.

When Huang Quan surrendered, he was led into the presence of the Ruler of Wei.

Cao Pi said, “You have surrendered to me because you desired to imitate the admirable conduct of Chen Ping and Han Xin of old.”

But Huang Quan replied, weeping, “The Ruler of Shu has been very kind to me, and he gave me the leadership of the army on the North of the Great River. Lu Xun cut me off so that I could not return to Shu, and I would not surrender to Wu, wherefore I have yielded to Your Majesty. Defeated as I am, I should be only too happy if my life were spared, but I have no claim to the credit of the virtuous ones of old.”

The reply satisfied the Ruler of Wei, and he conferred on him the title General Who Guards the South. Huang Quan, however, declined the offer.

Then one of the courtiers said, “A spy has reported that all of your family have been put to death by the Ruler of Shu.”

But the leader replied that he could not believe it.

“The Ruler of Shu and his officials trust each other. He knows my heart, and he would not injure my family.”

And the Ruler of Wei agreed with his opinion.



A poem has been written upbraiding Huang Quan:

That was a pity that Huang Quan grudged to die;
Though he yielded to Wei, not Wu,
Yet he crooked the knee in an alien court,
Which the loyal cannot do.

Cao Pi sought advice from Jia Xu concerning his design of bringing the whole country under his own rule.

“I wish to bring the whole empire under my rule. Which shall I first reduce, Shu or Wu?”

“Liu Bei is an able warrior, and Zhuge Liang is a most capable administrator. Sun Quan possesses discrimination, and his general, Lu Xun, occupies all the strategic positions of importance; the natural obstacles, the intervening rivers and spreading lakes, would be hard to overcome. I do not think you have any leader to match either of these two men. Even with the prestige of Your Majesty’s own presence, no one could guarantee the result. The better course is to hold on and await the outcome of the struggle between those two.”

“I have already dispatched three armies against Wu. Can it be that they will fail?”

The Chair of the Secretariat, Liu Ye, held the same opinion as his colleague.

Said he, “Lu Xun has just won a great victory over the Shu force of seven hundred thousand, and all his army is full of confidence. Further, there are the lakes and the rivers, which are natural difficulties hard to cope with. And again, Lu Xun is resourceful and well-prepared.”

The Ruler of Wei said, “Formerly, Sir, you urged me to attack Wu. Why do you now give contrary advice?”

“Because times have changed. When Wu was suffering defeat after defeat, the country was depressed and might be smitten. Now this great victory has changed all that, and their morale has increased a hundred times. I say now they may not be attacked.”

“Well, but I have decided to attack. So say no more,” said the Ruler of Wei.

He then led the Imperial Guards out to support his three armies.

But the scouts soon brought news justifying the opinion of his advisers: “A force of Wu has been sent to oppose each of our three armies. Lu Fan leads an army against Cao Xiu at Dongkou, Zhuge Jin against Cao Zhen at Nanjun, and Zhu Huan against Cao Ren at Ruxu.”

Liu Ye pointed this out and again said, “Wu has prepared, and no success can be expected.”

Still Cao Pi was obstinate, and marched.

The Wu leader, Zhu Huan, who had been sent against Cao Ren at Ruxu, was a young man of twenty-seven. He was bold and resourceful, and Sun Quan held him in great regard. Hearing that Cao Ren was going to attack Xianxi, Zhu Huan led the bulk of his troops to defend it, leaving only five thousand troops in Ruxu. Then he heard that the van of the enemy, fifty thousand under General Chang Diao, with the aid of Zhuge Qian and Wang Shuang, had made a dash for Ruxu, so he hastened back and found the officers were in great fear.

Drawing his sword, he made a speech, “Success depends upon the leader rather than on the number of soldiers. *The Art of War* says that the value of one soldier who inhabits the place equals that of two soldiers who come from afar; those who are hosts, however in small number, can overcome those who are guests. Now the enemy is weary from a long march, and I and you, my men, can hold this place together. We have the Great River to defend us on the south, and we are backed by the mountains

on the north. Success should be ours easily, and we are as hosts at home awaiting the arrival of our weary visitors. This will give us victory in every fight. Even if Cao Pi comes, we need feel no anxiety. How much less care we for Cao Ren and his troops?”

Zhu Huan issued orders to furl all the banners and to silence all the drums as if the city was empty of defenders.

In time, Chang Diao and his veterans of the van came to the city. Not a person was visible, and he hastened forward with all speed. But as he neared the city, suddenly a bomb went off. Immediately, up rose a forest of flags, and out dashed Zhu Huan with his sword drawn. And he made for Chang Diao. In the third encounter, Zhu Huan cut down Chang Diao, and the troops of Wu, rushing to the attack, thoroughly routed the invaders, slaying innumerable soldiers. Beside scoring a complete victory, Zhu Huan took much spoil of flags and weapons and horses.

Cao Ren himself, coming up later, was attacked by the troops from Xianxi and was also routed. He fled home to his master with the news of defeat and destruction.

And before the Ruler of Wei could decide what course to take in regard to this loss, the news came of the defeat of his another army: “Cao Zhen and Xiahou Shang were besieging Nanjun when Zhuge Jin from within and Lu Xun from without attacked in concert. The two generals suffered a great loss.”

Immediately, another report came: “Cao Xiu has been defeated by Lu Fan at Dongkou.”

So all three armies had failed and were lost.

Cao Pi sighed and said sadly, “This has come from my willfulness, and my neglect of the advice of Jia Xu and Liu Ye.”

The summer of that year was very unhealthy, and a pestilence swept away the soldiers more than half in number. So they were marched home to Capital Luoyang. The two countries were at enmity though they were not fighting.

Meanwhile, the First Ruler was failing. He remained in his Palace of Eternal Peace at Baidicheng and presently was confined to his couch. Gradually he became worse, and in the fourth moon of the third year of Manifest Might (AD 222), his condition became serious. He himself felt the end was near, and he was depressed and wept for his two lost Brothers till the sight of his eyes suffered. He was morose and ill-tempered: he could not bear any of his court near him, drove away his servants, and lay upon his couch, sad and solitary.

One evening as thus he lay, a sudden gust of wind came into the chamber, almost extinguishing the candles. As they burned bright again, he saw two men standing in the shade behind them.

“I told you I was worried,” said the First Ruler, “and bade you leave me. Why have you come back? Go!”

But they remained and did not go. Wherefore, the First Ruler rose and went over to look at them. As he drew near, he saw one was Guan Yu and the other Zhang Fei.

“Are you still alive, then, Brothers?” said he.

“We are not men; we are shades,” said Guan Yu. “The Supreme One has conferred spirithood upon us in consideration of our faithfulness throughout life, and ere long, Brother, we Three shall be together again.”

The First Ruler clutched at the figures and burst into tears; then he awoke. The two figures were no longer there. He called in his people and asked the hour. They told him the third watch.

“I am not much longer for this world,” said he with a sigh.

Messengers were sent to Capital Chengdu to summon the Prime Minister and other high officers of state to receive the Emperor’s last instructions. They came, Zhuge Liang bringing the two younger sons, Prince of Lu Liu Yong and Prince of Liang Liu Li. The eldest, the heir-apparent, was left in charge of the capital.

Zhuce Liang saw at once that his master was very ill. He bowed to the ground at the foot of the Dragon Couch.

The dying Emperor bade him come near and sit beside him, and he patted his Minister on the back, saying, “The attainment of emperorship was your work. Little thought you that I should prove so stupid as not to follow your advice and so bring about the late disasters. But I am deeply sorry, and now I shall not live long. My heir is a degenerate, but I must leave him to do the best he can with the great inheritance.”

And the tears flowed in streams.

“I trust Your Majesty will fulfill the hopes of the people by a speedy recovery,” said Zhuge Liang, also in tears.

Turning his head, the First Ruler saw Ma Su, Ma Liang’s brother, at the bedside. He bade him retire.

When Ma Su had left the chamber, the First Ruler said, “Do you think Ma Su is clever?”

“He is one of the ablest people in the empire,” said Zhuge Liang.

“I do not think so. I think his words exceed his deeds. Do not make much use of him. Watch him carefully.”

Having said this, he bade them summon the high officers of state to the chamber. Taking paper and pen, the First Ruler wrote his testament.

He handed it to the Prime Minister with a sigh and said, "I am no great scholar, and I only know the rough outlines of what should be known. But the Teacher has said: 'A bird's song is sad when death is near, and a dying person's words are good.' I was waiting that we might aid each other in the destruction of the Chaos and the restoration of the Han, but ere the work is complete I am called away, and this last command of mine I confide to you as Prime Minister to be handed to my son and heir, Liu Shan. My words are to be taken seriously. I trust that you will instruct and guide my son."

Zhuge Liang and all those present wept and prostrated themselves, saying, "We pray Your Majesty repose yourself. We will do our utmost whereby to prove our gratitude for the kindness we have received."

At the First Ruler's command, the attendants raised Zhuge Liang from the earth. With one hand, the dying man brushed away the falling tears, while with the other he grasped Zhuge Liang's hand.

And he said, "The end is near. I have something more to say as to a close general."

"What holy command has Your Majesty to give?" said Zhuge Liang.

The First Ruler said, "You are many times more clever than Cao Pi, and you must safeguard the kingdom and complete the great work. If my son can be helped, help him. But if he proves a fool, then take the throne yourself and be a ruler."

Such a speech almost startled Zhuge Liang out of his senses. A cold sweat broke out all over his body, and his limbs threatened to cease to support him.

He fell on his knees, saying, "I could never do otherwise than wear myself to the bone in the service of your son, whom I will serve till death."

He knocked his head upon the ground till blood ran down.

The dying man called Zhuge Liang closer, and at the same time making his two sons come near, he said to them, "My sons, remember your father's words. After my death, you are to treat the Prime Minister as you would your father and be not remiss, for thereby you will fulfill your father's hopes."

He made the two Princes pay to Zhuge Liang the obeisance due to a father.

Said Zhuge Liang, "Were I destroyed and ground into the earth, I should be unable to repay the kindness I have experienced."

Turning to the assembled officers, the First Ruler said, "As you have seen, I have confided my orphan son to the care of the Prime Minister and bidden my sons treat him as a father. You, too, Sirs, are to treat him with deference. This is my dying request and charge to you."

Turning to Zhao Yun, he said, "You and I have gone together through many dangers and difficulties. Now comes the parting of our ways. You will not forget our old friendship, and you must see to it that my sons follow my precepts."

"I shall never dare to give other than my best," said Zhao Yun. "The fidelity of the dog and horse is mine to give and shall be theirs."

Then the First Ruler turned to the others, "Noble Sirs, I am unable to speak to you one by one and lay a charge upon each individual. But I say to you: maintain your self-respect."

These were his last words. He was sixty-three, and he died on the twenty-fourth day of the fourth month (AD 222).



A poem was written by Du Fu on his death:

The Emperor set out to destroy the land that lay
 through the Three Gorges,
Failed he and breathed his last in the Palace of Eternal
 Peace,
The Palace fair of his thoughts lay not this side the
 highlands.
Beautiful chambers are vainly sought in his rural
 temple,
Now are the pines near his shrine, nesting places for
 herons,
Through the courts aged peasants saunter, enjoying
 their leisure,
Nearby often is found a shrine to this famous
 strategist,
Prince and minister's needs are now but offerings in
 season.



Thus died the First Ruler. All present lifted up their voices and wept.

The Prime Minister led the procession that escorted the coffin to the capital, and the heir, Liu Shan, came to the outskirts of the city, as a dutiful son should, to receive the remains with due respect. The coffin was laid in the Great Hall of the Palace, wherein they lamented and performed the

ceremonies appointed. At the end of these, the testament was opened and read:

“I first fell ill from a simple ailment. Other disorders followed, and it became evident that I should not recover.

“They say that death at fifty cannot be called premature. As I have passed sixty, I may not resent the call. But when I think of you and your brothers, I regret. Now I say to you, strive and strive again. Do not do evil because it is a small evil; do not leave undone a small good because it is a small good. Only with wisdom and virtue can people be won. But your father’s virtue was but slender, and do not imitate.

“After my death, you are to conduct the affairs of the state with the Prime Minister. You are to treat him as a father and serve him without remissness. You and your brothers are to seek instructions. This is my final and simple command.”

When the officials had read this, Zhuge Liang said, “The state cannot go a single day without a ruler, wherefore I beg you to install the heir as successor to the great line of Han.”

Thereupon, the ceremony was performed, and the new Emperor took his place. The style of the reign was changed to “Beginning Prosperity.” Zhuge Liang was made Lord of Wuxiang and Imperial Protector of Yizhou.

Then they buried the late Emperor at Huiling with the posthumous style of Liu Bei the Glorious Emperor.

The Empress, of the Wu family, was formally created Empress Dowager. The late Consort Gan became the Glorious Empress, and the

Lady Mi was granted similar, also posthumous, rank. There were promotions in rank and rewards for all, and a general amnesty was proclaimed.

Before long, knowledge of these things came to the Middle Land, and a report was sent to Capital Luoyang and made known to the Ruler of Wei.

Cao Pi felt relieved and was glad of the death of his rival, saying, “Liu Bei is dead; I am no longer worried. An attack during the critical moment can bring a victory over Shu.”

But Jia Xu dissuaded him, saying, “Liu Bei is gone, but surely he has confided the care of the state to Zhuge Liang, who is indebted to him so deeply. He will exhaust every effort to support his young lord. You may not hastily attack.”

As Jia Xu tendered this remonstrance, a man suddenly stepped out from the serried ranks of courtiers and said fiercely, “If you neglect this moment, can you expect a more favorable opportunity?”

All eyes turned to the speaker. It was Sima Yi.

The interruption greatly pleased Cao Pi, who at once asked how it was to be done.

Sima Yi propounded his plan in the following speech: “It would be very difficult to obtain success with our own resources. Hence we must use five armies and attack all round at the same time, so as to divide Zhuge Liang.”

“Where are the five armies to come from?” said Cao Pi.

Sima Yi went on, “The first is to be got from Liaodong, from the Xianbi State. You must write to King Kebi Neng and send him presents of gold and silks so that he may send one hundred thousand Qiang troops from Liaoxi to attack Xiping Pass. Secondly, the king of the Man Tribes, Meng Huo, must be persuaded to lead one hundred thousand troops to attack the south of Shu—Yizhou, Yongchang, Zangge, and Yuesui. Thirdly, you must send an ambassador to Wu with fair promises of an increase of territory, and so induce Sun Quan to march one hundred thousand troops to the attack of the Three Gorges, making Fucheng his objective. The fourth army can be got from General Meng Da in Shangyong, who can muster one hundred thousand troops to attack Hanzhong. Lastly, our own force of one hundred thousand troops may be placed under Cao Zhen, who will attack by way of Yangping Pass. With five hundred thousand troops making simultaneous attacks along five different directions, it would be hard for Zhuge Liang to hold his own, even if he had the talent of Lu Wang himself.”

The scheme delighted Cao Pi, who at once cast about for four glib-tongued messengers. He also issued a commission to Cao Zhen as Commander-in-Chief with the order to take Yangping Pass.

At this time, Zhang Liao and most others of the veterans who had served Cao Cao were keeping watch in various stations and passes and fords in Jizhou, Xuzhou, Qingzhou, and Hefei. They were not summoned for this expedition to the west.

After the accession of Liu Shan, the Latter Ruler, many of those who had served his father gradually died after the decease of their master. The work

of the administration of the country, the choice of officials, lawmaking, taxation, decision of legal cases, was all done by the Prime Minister.

As the Latter Ruler had no consort, the courtiers, headed by Zhuge Liang, proposed, “The daughter of the late General of the Flying Cavalry Zhang Fei is prudent, and she is now seventeen. Your Majesty should make her Empress.”

So Lady Zhang was married to the Emperor and became Empress Zhang.

It was in the autumn of the first year of Beginning Prosperity (AD 223) that the Latter Ruler heard of the plans and intentions of Wei against his state.

The persons who told him gave him full details, saying, “Wei has mustered five armies of one hundred thousand each to march against the River Lands. The first army, led by Commander-in-Chief Cao Zhen, is heading to Yangping Pass. The second army from Shangyong led by the rebel Meng Da is planning to attack Hanzhong. The third army from Wu is threatening the Three Gorges. The fourth army, under King Kebi Neng of the Qiang tribes, is marching to Xiping Pass. And the fifth army by Meng Huo of the Man nations is approaching the southern border near Yizhou, Yongchang, Zangge, and Yuesui. The border stations have sent flying requests for help. We have informed the Prime Minister. But his conduct puzzles us. We do not know why he does not take some action instead of remaining shut up in his palace all the time.”

The Latter Ruler became really alarmed, and he sent one of his personal attendants to call the Prime Minister to court.

The servant was gone a long time, and then returned to say, “The servants in the residence said the Prime Minister was ill and not to be seen.”

The young Emperor’s distress increased, and he sent two High Ministers—Dong Yun and Du Qiong—to Zhuge Liang, saying they were to see him, even if he was on his couch, and tell him the dreadful news of invasion. They went, but they got no farther than the gate. The keepers of the gate refused them admission.

But Du Qiong said, “The First Ruler had confided his son to the Prime Minister. It has not been long since His Majesty’s accession to the Throne that Cao Pi threatens to invade our territories with five armies. This is an urgent military matter. How can the Prime Minister make illness as an excuse not to appear?”

The wardens of the gate went inside with what was said.

After keeping them waiting a long time, the wardens returned, saying, “The Prime Minister is rather better and will be at court in the morning.”

The two ministers sighed deeply as they wended their way to the Emperor’s palace.

Next morning, a great crowd of officers assembled at the gate of the Prime Minister’s residence to wait for him to appear. But he did not come out. It began to grow late, and many of them were tired of waiting, and the crowd dispersed.

Du Qiong went again to the Emperor and suggested, “Your Majesty should go in person and try to get Zhuge Liang to say what should be done.”

The Latter Ruler then returned to his palace with the officials and told the Empress Dowager his trouble. She was also alarmed.

“What can he mean?” said she. “This does not look like acting in the spirit of the charge laid upon him by the late Emperor. Let me go myself.”

“Oh no,” said Dong Yun. “Your Majesty must not go. We think all is well, and the Prime Minister certainly understands and will do something. Beside, you must let His Majesty go first, and if the Prime Minister still shows remissness, then Your Majesty can summon him to the Temple of the Dynasty and ask him.”

So it was left at that. And the next day, the Emperor rode in his chariot to the gate of his minister. When the doorkeepers saw the imperial chariot appear, they fell upon their knees to welcome the Emperor.

“Where is the Prime Minister?” asked he.

“We do not know. But we have orders not to let in the crowd of officers.”

The Emperor then descended and went on foot right in to the third gate. Then he saw Zhuge Liang leaning on a staff beside a fishpond, looking at the fish. The Latter Ruler approached, and stood behind him for a long time.

Presently, the Latter Ruler said slowly and with dignity, “Is the Prime Minister really enjoying himself?”

Zhuce Liang started and looked round. When he saw who the speaker was, he suddenly dropped his staff and prostrated himself.

“I ought to be put to death ten thousand times!” said Zhuge Liang.

But the Emperor put forth his hand and helped him to rise, saying, “Cao Pi threatens immediate invasion from five points. Why will you not come forth and attend to business?”

Zhuce Liang laughed. He conducted the Emperor into an inner room, and, when he was seated, Zhuge Liang addressed the Emperor, saying,

“Could it be possible that I was ignorant of these five armies? I was not looking at the fishes; I was thinking.”

“But, this being so, what shall we do?”

“I have already turned back that Kebi Neng of the Qiangs, and Meng Huo of the Mans, and the rebel leader Meng Da, and the army from Wei. I have also thought out a plan to circumvent the army from Wu, but I need a special sort of person to carry it out. I want an envoy, an able talker, one capable of persuading other people. It was because I have not found such a person yet that I was so deeply in thought. But Your Majesty may set your mind at rest and not be anxious.”

The Latter Ruler heard this half-terrified and half-glad.

“Surely your superhuman devices are too deep for the mortal. But may I ask how these armies have been made to turn back?”

“Since His Late Majesty bade me take the best care of your welfare, I dare not be remiss for a single moment. Some officers in Chengdu are ignorant of that refinement of war which consists in not allowing the enemy to guess your plans. How could I let them know anything? When I heard that Kebi Neng, the king of the Qiangs, might invade, I remembered that Ma Chao’s forefathers were friendly with those tribespeople and they had a high opinion of Ma Chao, calling him General Who Possesses Heavenly Prestige. So I sent orders by dispatch to Ma Chao to hold the Xiping Pass, and to prepare ambushes in certain places and change them daily so as to keep the Qiangs off. That settled them.

“I sent hastily to the south to order Wei Yan to move certain bodies of troops about through the southwest territories, to be seen and then to disappear, to go in and come out, and to march to and fro, so that the Mans should be perplexed. The Mans are brave but prone to doubts and

hesitations, and they would not advance in the face of the unknown. Hence there is nothing to fear in that quarter.

“I also knew that Meng Da and our Li Yan were sworn friends. I had left Li Yan in charge of the Palace of Eternal Peace. I sent Li Yan a letter and urged him to write to Meng Da, so that Meng Da would feign illness and not move his army.

“I sent Zhao Yun to occupy Yangping Pass and all the strategic positions on the way by which Cao Zhen would march, and bade him defend only and not go to the battle. If our troops refuse to come out, Cao Zhen will certainly have to retire. So all those four are settled. But for greater security I have sent Zhang Bao and Guan Xing each with thirty thousand troops to camp at points whence they can quickly help any of the others who may need it. And none of these arrangements are known here.

“Now there is only Wu left to deal with. Had the other four armies succeeded and Shu been in danger, Sun Quan would have come to the attack. If the others fail, I know he will not budge, for he will remember that Cao Pi has just sent three armies to attack his country. And this being so, I want someone with a ready tongue and ingenious mind to go and talk plainly to Sun Quan. So far, I have not found such a person, and I am perplexed. I regret that I have given Your Majesty occasion to make this journey.”

“The Empress Dowager also wanted to come,” said the Emperor. “But now you have spoken, O Minister Father, I am as one awakened from a dream. I shall grieve no more.”

They two drank a few cups of wine together, and the Prime Minister escorted his master to his chariot. A ring of courtiers were waiting, and they could not help remarking the happiness that shone in their master’s face.

The Latter Ruler took his leave and returned to his palace, but the courtiers did not know what to think.

Now Zhuge Liang had noted a certain man among the crowd who smiled and looked quite happy. Zhuge Liang looked at him intently and then recollected his name, which was Deng Zhi of Xinye, a descendant of Commander Deng Yu of Han. Deng Zhi was currently the Chair of the Census Board. Zhuge Liang sent a man privately to detain Deng Zhi, and when all the others had gone, Zhuge Liang led him into the library for a chat. Presently, he came to the matter near his heart.

“The three states have become a fact,” said Zhuge Liang. “Now if our state wanted to absorb the other two and restore the condition of one rule, which country should it attack first?”

“Though Wei is the real rebel, Wei is strong and would be very difficult to overthrow. Any move against it would have to develop slowly. As our Emperor has but lately succeeded his father and the people are none too decided in his favor, I should propose a treaty of mutual defense with Wu. This would obliterate the enmity of His Late Majesty and would have important results. However, you, Sir, may have another opinion. What is it?”

“That is what I have been thinking of this long time, but I had not the man for the task. Now I have found him.”

“What do you want the man to do?” said Deng Zhi.

“I want him to go as envoy to Wu to negotiate such a treaty. As you understand the position so well, you will surely do honor to your prince’s commission as envoy. There is no other who would succeed.”

“I fear I am not equal to such a task: I am not clever enough and too ignorant.”

“I will inform the Emperor tomorrow and beg him to appoint you. Of course you will accept.”

Deng Zhi consented and then took his leave. As promised, Zhuge Liang sent up a memorial, and the Latter Ruler consented that the mission should be entrusted to Deng Zhi. And he started.

The din of war will cease in Wu,
When Shu's desires are known.

For the success or failure of this mission, read the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XX

CHAPTER 86

USING WORDS, QIN MI OVERCOMES ZHANG WEN; SETTING FIRE, XU SHENG DEFEATS CAO PI.

After his recent exploits, Lu Xun became the one hero of Wu. He was given the title General Who Upholds the State, was ennobled as Lord of Jiangling, and received the Governorship of Jingzhou. He became Supreme Commander of all the military forces.

Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong, thinking the moment opportune for enhancing their lord's dignity, sent in a memorial proposing that his rule should be designated by a distinctive style, and Sun Quan assumed "Yellow Might Era" as his reign style (AD 222).

Then arrived a messenger from Wei, and he was called in to an assembly and bidden to state his business.

The messenger said, "Recently, Shu sent to Wei for help, and, the situation being misunderstood, the Ruler of Wei dispatched a force against Wu. Now this action is greatly regretted. In Wei, it is thought desirable to set four armies in motion against Shu to capture it. Now if Wu will assist, and success crowns these efforts, Wei and Wu will share the conquered territory."

Sun Quan listened but was not prepared to give a decided answer. He betook himself to his counselors, Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong.

They said, "Lu Xun is a man of profound knowledge. He should be consulted."

So Lu Xun was called, and his speech ran thus: "Cao Pi is too firmly established in the Middle Land to be upset now; if this offer of his be refused, we shall provoke his enmity. Neither Wei nor Wu, so far as I see, has anyone fit to oppose Zhuge Liang. We must perforce consent and put our army in order. But we can wait till we see how the four armies speed. If Shu seems likely to fall, and Zhuge Liang is outmaneuvered, then our army can be dispatched, and we will take Capital Chengdu. If the four armies fail, we shall have to consider."

So Sun Quan said to the envoy of Wei, "We are not ready at the moment, so we will choose a day to start later."

And with this answer, the envoy left.

Next, they made careful inquiries about the success or failure of the four armies against Shu.

The spies reported: "The western Qiangs under King Kebi Neng have turned back when they saw Ma Chao in command at Xiping Pass. The southern Mans led by Meng Huo have been perplexed at the tactics of Wei Yan and have retreated to their territories. The Shangyong leader, Meng Da, had set out, but halfway, fell ill and went back. And Cao Zhen's army, while marching toward Yangping Pass, has been brought to a halt by the defensive preparations of Zhao Yun, who has garrisoned every pass and occupied every point of vantage; they eventually retreated, after being camped in the Xie Valley for some time."

Knowing all this, Sun Quan said to his officials, "Lu Xun's words were indeed prophetic; he made most perfect deductions. Any rash action on my part would place me on bad terms with Shu."

Just then, the coming of an envoy from Shu was announced.

Said Zhang Zhao, "This mission is also part of Zhuge Liang's scheme to divert danger from Shu. Deng Zhi has come as envoy."

"That being so, how should I reply?" asked Sun Quan.

"I will tell you. Set up a large cauldron and pour therein a quantity of oil. Light a fire beneath. When the oil is boiling, choose a goodly company of your tallest and brawniest fighting guards, arm them, and draw them up in lines between the Palace gate and your throne room. Then, summon Deng Zhi. But before he can say a word, forewarn him that he will have the same fate of being boiled in oil if being guilty of the same sort of treachery as Li Yiji when he was a persuader to the state of Qi. Then see what Deng Zhi will say."

Sun Quan followed this advice and prepared the cauldron of oil and had the strong guards ready. Then he bade them introduce the envoy.

Deng Zhi came, his ceremonial dress in perfect order, and advanced as far as the gate. Seeing the grim array of fighting men armed, some with gleaming swords, some with great axes, some with long spears, and some with short knives, he understood at once what was meant, but he never blenched. He advanced quite steadily and bravely till he reached the door of the hall. Even when he saw the boiling cauldron of oil and the savage executioners glaring at him, he only smiled.

He was led to the front of the curtain behind which sat the Prince of Wu, and he made the ordinary salutation of raising his extended arms, but he did not bow in obeisance.

The Prince bade his attendants roll up the curtain, and called out, "Why do you not make an obeisance?"

Deng Zhi replied, "The envoy of the superior state does not make an obeisance to the ruler of a smaller country."

“If you do not control that tongue of yours but will let it wag, you will be like that fellow Li Yiji who went to talk to Qi. You will soon find yourself in the cauldron.”

Then Deng Zhi laughed aloud, saying, “People say there are many sages in Wu. No one would believe that they would be frightened of a simple scholar.”

This reply only increased Sun Quan’s anger, and he said, “Who fears an unmerited fool like you?”

“If you fear not the envoy, why so anxious about what he may have to say?”

“Because you come here as spokesman of Zhuge Liang, and you want me to sever with Wei and turn to your country. Is not that your message?”

“I am a simple scholar of Shu, and I am come to explain matters to the state of Wu. But here I find armed guards and a boiling cauldron, all prepared against an envoy. How can I form any other opinion than that you will not allow me to speak?”

As soon as Sun Quan heard these words, he bade the soldiers go, and called the envoy into the hall.

There, he invited Deng Zhi to a seat and said, “What is the real matter between Wei and Wu? I desire that you would inform me.”

Then Deng Zhi replied, “Do you, great Prince, desire to discuss peace with Wei or with Shu?”

“I really desire to discuss peace with the Ruler of Shu. But he is young and inexperienced and ignorant, and unable to carry a matter through.”

“Prince, you are a valiant warrior, just as Zhuge Liang is a great minister. Now Shu has the strength of its mountainous geography, just as Wu has the protection of its three rivers. If these two countries are at peace,

they are mutually protective. They may swallow up the rest of the empire, or they may stand secure alone. If you send tribute to Wei and acknowledge yourself one of its ministers, you will be expected to attend at court, and your heir-apparent will become a servant in that court; if you disobey, an army of Wei will be sent to attack you. Shu also will come down the river and invade your country. Then the South Land will be yours no longer. And if you listen not to these words of mine, and refuse my offer, I shall commit suicide before you to prove I am not persuading you only for our own benefit.”

As Deng Zhi spoke these last words, he gathered up his robes and marched down the hall as though he was just going to jump into the cauldron.

“Stop him!” cried Sun Quan, and they did so.

Then he requested Deng Zhi to go into an inner apartment, where he treated the envoy as a guest of the highest honor.

“O Master,” said Sun Quan, “your words exactly express my thoughts, and I desire to make a league of peace with your country. Are you willing to be the intermediary?”

“Just now it was you, O Prince, who wished to boil this poor servant. Now it is also you who wishes to use him. How can such a doubtful person be trusted?”

“My mind is made up,” replied Sun Quan. “Do not doubt me, Master.”

Deng Zhi was detained, and a conclave of officers gathered.

Said Sun Quan to the assembly, “Under my hand are all eighty-one counties of the southeast, and I have the lands of Jingzhou to boot, yet I am not so well off as that little country of Shu, for Shu has Deng Zhi for an

envoy, and he glorifies his lord. I have no one to send to declare my wishes to Shu.”

Then one stepped forth and said he would go. The speaker was Zhang Wen of Wucheng, who held the office of Imperial Commander.

“Sir, I fear that when you reach Shu and are in the presence of Zhuge Liang, you will not explain my real sentiments,” said Sun Quan.

Zhang Wen replied, “Think you that I shall fear him? He also is but a man.”

Sun Quan conferred great gifts on Zhang Wen and sent him on the return mission to Shu to negotiate the league of peace.

While Deng Zhi was absent, Zhuge Liang said to his lord, “This mission to Wu will succeed, and of the many wise people in the east, one will come as return envoy. Your Majesty should treat him with courtesy, and let him return to Wu to complete the league. For if we have an alliance with Wu, Wei will not dare to send an army against us. And if we are safe from those quarters, I will lead an expedition to subdue the Mans in the south country. After that, we can deal with Wei. If Wei is reduced, Wu will not last long, and the whole empire will again be under one ruler.”

Presently the report reached the capital that Deng Zhi and Zhang Wen, as envoy of Wu, would soon arrive. The Latter Ruler assembled the courtiers to receive them honorably. The envoy of Wu carried himself as one who had attained his desires and advanced boldly. Having made his salute, the Latter Ruler gave him to sit on a brocaded stool on his left hand. A banquet followed at which Zhang Wen was treated with much honor. At

the end of the banquet, the whole court escorted the envoy to the guesthouse where he was to lodge.

On the second day, there was a banquet at the Prime Minister's palace, and Zhuge Liang broached the real business.

He said, "Our First Ruler was not on friendly terms with Wu. But that is all changed, as is demonstrated by these banquets, and our present Emperor is disposed to be very friendly. It is hoped that the former enmity may be entirely forgotten and the two countries swear eternal friendship and alliance in their common end: the destruction of Wei. I look to you, Sir, to speak in favor of this league."

Zhang Wen said that he would support the plan. The wine went merrily round, and as the envoy became mellow, he laughed freely and swaggered and put on a proud demeanor.

Next day, the Latter Ruler gave Zhang Wen rich presents of gold and studs and prepared a parting banquet for him in the south guest chamber, and all the court assembled to take leave of him. The Prime Minister paid him assiduous attention and pressed him to drink. While this banquet was in progress, a man suddenly came in as if he were already drunk, made a proud sort of salutation to the company, and at once took a seat.

His conduct seemed strange to Zhang Wen, who asked, "Who is the newcomer, Sir Prime Minister?"

"He is a man named Qin Mi, a Doctorate Academician of Yizhou," replied Zhuge Liang.

"He may be that," said Zhang Wen with a laugh, "but I wonder if he has any learning at all inside him."

Qin Mi listened without changing countenance, and said, "Since our children are all learned, of course I am more so."

“What may have been your special studies, Sir?” said Zhang Wen.

“Many things: astronomy on one hand, geography on the other, the three teachings and the nine systems, many philosophers, history all through, and many sacred books and traditions.”

“Since you talk so big,” said Zhang Wen, “I should like to ask you a few questions on celestial matters. Now has the sky a head?”

“Yes, it has a head.”

“Where is it?”

“In the western quarter. The Odes say, ‘God turns his head kindly toward the west,’ and further it follows from this that the head is in the west.”

“Well, has the sky ears?”

“Oh, yes. The sky is above and listens to all things below. The Odes say, ‘The crane calls from the midst of the marsh, its cry is heard by the sky.’ How could the sky hear without ears?”

“Has the sky feet?”

“It has. The Odes say, ‘Heaven treads down difficulties.’ If there were no feet, how could it tread?”

“Has Heaven a name?”

“Why not?”

“Then what is it?”

“Liu.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because the Emperor’s family name is Liu, and he is the Son of Heaven. That is how I know.”

“Does the sun spring from the east?”

“Though it does, yet it sets in the west.”

All this time, Qin Mi’s repartees had flashed back clear and perfect. They came so naturally as to astonish all the guests. Zhang Wen had no word to reply to them.

Then it became Qin Mi’s turn: “You are a famous scholar in your own land, Sir, and since you have asked so many questions about Heaven, I take it you are well up in all celestial matters. When original Chaos resolved into its two elements, Yin and Yang, the lighter portion rose and became sky, and the grosser sank and solidified into earth. When Gonggong’s rebellion was crushed, his head struck the Imperfect Mountain, the pillar which upholds Heaven, and it was broken and the bonds of Earth were destroyed. Heaven fell over to the northwest, and Earth sank into the southeast. Since Heaven was ethereal and had floated to the top, how could it fall over? Another thing I do not know is what is beyond the ether. I should be glad if you would explain, Master.”

Zhang Wen had no reply ready, but he rose from his place and bowed his acknowledgment, saying, “I knew not that there was so much ability in this land. I am happy to have heard such a discourse. Now all obstructions have disappeared, and I see quite clearly.”

But Zhuge Liang, fearing lest the guest should feel mortified, soothed him with fair words, saying, “This is all play upon words, the sort of puzzles one propounds at a merry feast. You, honored Sir, know that the tranquility and safety of states are no matters to joke with.”

The envoy bowed. Then Deng Zhi was ordered to return to Wu and thank its ruler for his courtesy, and he was to accompany Zhang Wen. So both, having taken leave of the Prime Minister, set out on their journey to the east.

In the meantime, Sun Quan was beginning to feel perplexed at the long delay of his envoy. He had summoned a council to discuss this question, when the report came that his own envoy had returned and Deng Zhi was with him. They were brought in forthwith. Zhang Wen, having made his obeisance, began to discourse upon the virtue of the Ruler of Shu and Zhuge Liang and to lay before his lord the proposal for a league of peace. Deng Zhi, the Chair of the Secretariat, was empowered to discuss this matter.

Turning to Deng Zhi, Sun Quan said, "Would it not be a happy result if tranquility should be restored to the empire by the destruction of Wei, and Wu and Shu should share its administration?"

"The sky knows not two suns," replied Deng Zhi, "nor can the people recognize two kings. If Wei be destroyed, no one can say upon whom the divine command will devolve. But one who becomes an overlord must perfect his virtue, and those who become ministers must be wholly loyal. In this way, strife will cease."

Sun Quan smiled, saying, "And your sincerity is beyond question."

Deng Zhi was dismissed with rich gifts, and after this Wu and Shu were good friends.

The negotiations between his two rivals were reported in Capital Luoyang without loss of time, and Cao Pi was very angry.

"If they have made an alliance, it can only mean that they cherish the intention of swallowing the Middle Land. My best move is to strike first."

He called a great council. This council lacked the presence of Regent Marshal Cao Ren and Grand Commander Jia Xu, who had both died.

In the council, Counselor Xin Pi stepped forward and said, “The Middle Land is extensive but the population so sparse that no successful army could be raised just now. My advice is to wait ten years, spending that period in forming an army and in cultivating the land till stores and weapons shall have been accumulated. Then, both our rivals may be destroyed.”

“This is only the distorted opinion of a perverted pedant. Having made this league, Shu and Wu may fall upon us at any moment. This matter cannot be postponed for ten years,” said the Ruler of Wei.

An edict appeared commanding the enlistment of soldiers and the formation of an army to subdue Wu.

Sima Yi then said, “Battleships are necessary, as Wu is protected by the Great River. Your Majesty must lead small and big vessels. The navy can advance by way of the River Huai, taking Shouchun. When you reach Guangling, the river is to be crossed and Nanxu is to be captured. Then Wu will be subdued.”

This plan was accepted, and the construction of dragon ships was put in hand and went on day and night. Ten were built two hundred spans long to carry two thousand marines each. They also collected three thousand fighting ships.

In the autumn of the fifth year of Yellow Dawn (AD 224), the various generals assembled, and Cao Zhen was appointed leader of the first corps. Zhang Liao, Zhang He, Wen Ping, and Xu Huang were Chief Commanders; Xu Chu and Lu Qian were guards of the Center Army; and Cao Xiu commanded the rear guard; the strategists were Liu Ye and Jiang Ji. In all, land and marine forces numbered over three hundred thousand troops.

When the starting day was decided upon, Sima Yi was made Chair of the Secretariat and left in the capital with the powers of Regent Marshal.

The spies told the Prince of Wu's attendants of the dangers, and the latter hastened to inform the Prince.

They said, "Cao Pi is leading the dragon fleet and commanding three hundred thousand marines and ground forces against the South Land, and the danger is very great."

When Sun Quan met his council, Gu Yong said, "My lord, you can call upon Shu for help according to the treaty. Write to Zhuge Liang and get him to send out an army through Hanzhong so as to divert part of Wei's army. Also send an army to Nanxun to oppose them there."

"I shall have to recall Lu Xun," said the Prince. "He is the only man to undertake this great task."

"Do not move him if you can help it. He is necessary for the protection of Jingzhou."

"Yes, I know. But there is no other strong enough to help me."

At these words, Xu Sheng advanced, saying, "I know I am not very able, but I desire to be given an army to meet this danger. If Cao Pi crosses the river in person, I will make him prisoner and present him at the gate of the Palace. If he does not come over here, I will slay so many of his soldiers that his army shall not dare even to look southward."

Sun Quan was pleased to find a willing volunteer, and replied, "Noble Sir, what anxiety need I feel if I have your protection?"

Xu Sheng was given the title of General Who Protects the East and made Chief Commander of all the forces in Nanxu and Jianye. As soon as he had received his orders, he retired. He gave the command to gather enormous quantities of weapons, and had many flags and banners made for the protection of the riverbanks.

But another, impetuous, young leader was anxious to take more vigorous measures, and he stood forth, saying, “My lord has laid upon you, O General, a heavy responsibility. But if you really desire to destroy the invading force and capture Cao Pi, you should send an army to meet him on the north side in the South of River Huai. I fear failure if you wait till the northern troops have come this far.”

The young man was Sun Shao, nephew of the Prince of Wu. Sun Shao was born to a Yu family, and he was adopted by Sun Ce and given the Sun family name. He had already the title of General Who Possesses Wide Prestige, and was in command at Guangling. Though young and impetuous, he was very valiant.

Said Xu Sheng, “Cao Pi’s army is strong and its leaders famous. I hold that we may not cross the river to meet him, but await the arrival of his ships on the other side. Then I shall carry out my plan.”

“I have three thousand troops of my own, and I know the country about Guangling thoroughly. Let me go across the river and fight a battle. I will willingly undergo the penalty if I fail,” said Sun Shao.

However, Xu Sheng refused, and all the pleadings of his impetuous general were vain.

And when Sun Shao still persisted, the commander grew angry and said, “What control shall I have if you are allowed to disobey orders?”

Xu Sheng ordered the lictors to take Sun Shao out and put him to death.

They led him away, and forthwith, the black flag was hoisted. But one of Sun Shao's generals went off in hot haste to tell Sun Quan, who came immediately to try to save his favorite. Happily, the execution had not been accomplished when the Prince appeared on the scene, and he bade the executioners disperse. The youth was saved.

Sun Shao began to press his claim to the Prince, saying, "I have been at Guangling, and if we do not attack the enemy there, but let him get down to the river, there will be the end of Wu."

Sun Quan went into the camp, and Xu Sheng came to receive him.

When the Prince was seated in his tent, Xu Sheng said, "O Prince, you placed me in command of the force to repulse Wei. Now this general of mine, Sun Shao, is disobedient and should suffer death. I would ask why he should be pardoned."

"He is naturally hot and impetuous. He has been guilty of disobedience, but I hope you will overlook his fault."

"The law is none of my making, nor is it yours, O Prince. It is a state penalty, and if relation is enough to evade it, where is discipline?"

"He has offended, and you have the right to judge and punish. But although his real name is Yu Shao, yet my brother Sun Ce loved him and gave him our family name. Further, Sun Shao has rendered me good service. If he should be put to death, I should fail in my fraternal duty."

"Since you have intervened, O Prince, I remit the death penalty."

Sun Quan bade his nephew thank his chief, but the youth would not make an obeisance. On the contrary, he loudly maintained the correctness of his view.

“Leading troops against Cao Pi is the only way,” cried Sun Shao. “I cannot consent to your other plan even under the penalty of death!”

Xu Sheng’s countenance changed. The recalcitrant young man was ordered to leave the tent by Sun Quan.

“He will not be any loss to us,” said Sun Quan to Xu Sheng, “and I will not employ him again.”

Then the Prince left and returned to his own place.

That night, they reported to Xu Sheng that Sun Shao had gone secretly over the river with his own three thousand troops. Xu Sheng did not wish him to come to harm, as evidently that would displease the Prince, so Xu Sheng sent a force to support him. Ding Feng was chosen to command this reinforcement, and he was told what to do.

The Ruler of Wei, in his dragon ships, reached Guangling, and the van got to the riverbank. He came to survey the position.

“How many soldiers are on the other bank?” asked Cao Pi.

Cao Zhen replied, “I have not seen a single one. Nor are there any flags or encampments.”

“That is a ruse. I will go and find out.”

So Cao Pi set out to cross the river in one of the dragon ships. He anchored under the bank. On his boat were displayed the imperial emblems of dragon, phoenix, sun, and moon, and they shone out bravely. Seated in the ship, the Emperor looked up and down the south bank, but not a man was visible.

“Do you think we should cross?” asked the Emperor of his strategists.

Liu Ye replied, "If the rules of war mean anything, they ought to be prepared. We think Your Majesty should exercise caution. Wait a few days and watch. Then, perhaps, the van might be sent to make a reconnaissance."

"So I think," said the Ruler of Wei. "But as it is now late, we will pass the night on the river."

It was a dark night, and the ships was brilliantly lighted up; it seemed like day on board. But all along the south bank, there appeared no glimmer of light.

"What do you think it means?" said Cao Pi.

The courtiers replied, "They heard that Your Majesty's heavenly army was coming, and ran away like so many rats."

The Ruler of Wei laughed to himself. When daylight came, there came with it a thick fog, so that nothing on the bank could be seen. After a time, a breeze blew off the fog, and then, to their immense surprise, they found that the whole length of the South of the Great River as far as they could see was one battlement, with towers at intervals, while spears and swords glittered in the sun and flags and pennons fluttered in the breeze.

In just a short time, several reports came: "A long wall by the Great River has grown up in a night and stands there with carts and masts of ships lying along it, stretching some one hundred miles from Shidou to Nanxu."

The fact was that the wall was an imitation, and the warriors that manned it were bundles of reeds dressed in soldiers' uniforms. And this was Xu Sheng's tactic. But the sight chilled the ardor of the invaders.

"My hosts of troops are no use against such warriors. We can do nothing against those talents of the South Land," said Cao Pi.

He thought over this sadly enough. But now the wind had increased in force, and white combers began to heave up in the river, and waters broke

over his boat, drenching the dragon robes. The ship seemed as if it would roll right over. So Cao Zhen sent out small boats to rescue his master and his people. But they were too affrighted to move. Wherefore, Wen Ping, who was in charge, leaped on board and helped the Emperor down into one of the smaller craft, which then flew away before the wind and got safely into a creek.

Soon came a hasty messenger to report: "Zhao Yun is marching out through Yangping Pass and threatening Changan."

This frightened Cao Pi so badly that he decided to retreat, and gave orders to retire. The whole army was in a mood to run away, and moved off toward the north, pursued by the troops of Wu. To hasten the march, the Ruler of Wei bade his soldiers abandon all the imperial paraphernalia and impediments. The dragon ships withdrew to the River Huai one by one.

As they moved in disorder, suddenly arose the sounds of an enemy force, shouts and the rolling of drums and the blaring of trumpets, and a cohort marched down obliquely on to their line. And at the head was Sun Shao.

The troops of Wei could make no effective stand, and many were slain, while large numbers were driven into the river and drowned. By dint of great efforts, the Emperor was saved and got away up the river. But when they had sailed about ten miles, they saw ahead a tract of blazing reeds. The enemy had poured fish oil over the dry reeds and set them afire. The wind was spreading the flames down river toward the fleet of Wei, and the heat was intense. The dragon ships had to stop.

Cao Pi was put into a smaller craft and taken on shore. His larger ships were presently set on fire and destroyed. They mounted the Emperor on a horse and moved along the bank, but soon, they fell in with another body of troops. This time it was the supports under Ding Feng.

Zhang Liao rode ahead to engage the leader, but was soon wounded by an arrow of Ding Feng in the loins. However, he was helped away by Xu Huang, and the Ruler of Wei got safely out of the turmoil. The loss of soldiers was heavy, and a huge booty of horses, carts, ships, and weapons fell to the victors.

So the Wei armies went away north thoroughly beaten, while Xu Sheng had scored a great success. Sun Quan richly rewarded him.

Zhang Liao got to Xuchang, but only to die from the effects of his wound. He was honorably buried by the Ruler of Wei.

It has been said that Zhao Yun was threatening Changan. But soon after he went through Yangping Pass, the Prime Minister of Shu sent a dispatch to recall him because General Yong Kai in Yizhou had joined himself with the Mans and invaded the four southern territories. So Zhao Yun returned. Meanwhile, Ma Chao was ordered to take command of Yangping Pass.

The Prime Minister was about to go to subdue the nations along the south border. He was then preparing at Chengdu for this expedition.

First Wu met Wei and drove them north,
Then Shu against the Mans went south.

The story of this campaign will follow in the next chapters.



END OF ACT XX

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XXI:

THE RESOLUTE KING:

THE CONQUEST OF NANZHONG

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXI

CHAPTER 87

CONQUERING NANZHONG, THE PRIME MINISTER MARCHES THE ARMY;
OPPOSING HEAVENLY TROOPS, THE KING OF THE MANS IS
CAPTURED.

With Prime Minister Zhuge Liang's administration of affairs in the two River Lands began a period of happiness and prosperity for the people. Tranquility prevailed, and the state of society was well nigh perfect: doors unbolted at night, property left by the roadside remaining untouched till the owner returned for it. Moreover, the harvests were rich year after year, and old and young, with fair, round bellies, well-lined, simply sang with joy. The people hastened to fulfill their state duties and vied with each other in the performance of all arts. As a natural consequence, all military preparations were perfect, the granaries bursting with grain and the treasury full to overflowing.

Such was the state of things when, in the third year of Beginning Prosperity (AD 225), the news came from Yizhou to the capital to report: "The Man King, Meng Huo, leading one hundred thousand Man tribesmen, has invaded the south and is laying waste to the country. Yong Kai, the Governor of Jianning, a descent of the Han Lord Yong Chi of Shifang, had joined Meng Huo in rebellion. Zhu Bao and Gao Ding, the Governors of Zangge and Yuesui, have yielded to the invaders. But the Governor of Yongchang, Wang Kang, is staunchly holding out. The three rebels—Yong Kai, Gao Ding, and Zhu Bao—who had joined the invaders, are now acting as guides and assisting in the attack on Yongchang, which has remained

faithful. Governor Wang Kang, ably assisted by Lu Kai, his Deputy Governor, is making an all-out effort to defend the city with only its ordinary inhabitants as fighting men. The position is very desperate.”

When this news came, Zhuge Liang went into the Palace and thus memorialized to his lord, “The contumacy of the Mans is a real danger to our state. I feel it incumbent upon me to lead an expedition to reduce the tribespeople to obedience.”

But the Latter Ruler was afraid, and said, “Sun Quan is in the east, and Cao Pi the north. If you abandon me and either of them comes, what shall I do?”

“Your Majesty need have no fear. We have just concluded a league of peace with Wu, and I think they will be true to their pledge. Li Yan in Baidicheng is quite a match for Lu Xun. Cao Pi’s recent defeat has taken the keenness out of his army, so he will not feel inclined to make any expeditions further. Ma Chao is in command at the passes between Wei and Hanzhong. I shall also leave Guan Xing and Zhang Bao with forces to reinforce any point where danger may appear. I can assure Your Majesty that no untoward event will happen.

“I am going to sweep clean the Man country so that we may have a free hand to attack Wei when the day comes. Thus, I shall be enabled to requite the honor paid me by your father the First Ruler, who came thrice to seek me and who doubled my obligation when he confided to me the care of his son.”

“Indeed I am young and ignorant,” replied the Latter Ruler, “and can only exist with you to decide for me.”

At that moment, Counselor Wang Lian, a man of Nanyang, stepped forward, crying, “No, no, Sir; you may not go! Nanzhong is a wild country reeking with malaria. It is wrong that an officer of state in such an exalted

and responsible position should go away on a distant expedition. These rebels and tribespeople are but an irritation, not a disease, and an ordinary leader would be enough to send against them. He would not fail.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “This country of the Mans is distant and mostly tribal. To pacify them will be difficult, and I feel I ought to go. When to be harsh and when to show leniency are matters to be decided on at the moment, and instructions cannot be easily given to another.”

Zhuge Liang steadily opposed all Wang Lian’s efforts to bring about a change of intention, and he soon took leave of the Latter Ruler and prepared to start.

Jiang Wan was Army Counselor of the expedition; Fei Yi, Secretary; Dong Jue and Fan Jian, Army Inspectors; Zhao Yun and Wei Yan, Commanders; Wang Ping and Zhang Yi, Deputy Commanders. Beside these were another half-a-hundred leaders and officers of Shu, and the whole force was five hundred thousand troops.

Soon after the force marched south to Yizhou, Guan Suo, the third son of Guan Yu, appeared and wished to see Zhuge Liang.

And Guan Suo said to him, “After the fall of Jingzhou, I was hidden by the Bao family, from where I wanted to go to the River Lands to ask the First Ruler for vengeance for my father. But I fell in illness, which was long and severe, and I only just recovered. I was then traveling toward Chengdu to meet with the Latter Ruler, when I met the army for the southern expedition. I know that vengeance has been taken on the murderers of my father. And now I want to present myself to the Prime Minister.”

Zhuge Liang was greatly affected to see him. He sent news of the young man’s arrival to the court and gave Guan Suo the post of Van Leader.

The army, on foot and on horse, marched in the best of order, eating when hungry, drinking when thirsty, camping at night, and moving by day. No plundering was permitted, and the people suffered not at all.

When Yong Kai and his fellow rebels heard that Zhuge Liang was marching against them, they called their troops together and formed three divisions, Gao Ding in the center, Yong Kai on the left, and Zhu Bao on the right. They mustered about fifty thousand troops in each army, and they went to oppose the march of the Shu army.

Gao Ding sent E Huan to lead the van. This E Huan was nine spans tall in stature and savage of countenance. His weapon was a two-bladed halberd. He was very valiant and could face many warriors. He led his own cohort out in advance of the main body and fell in with the leading bodies of the Shu army immediately after they had gotten into Yizhou.

The two sides drew up for battle. The arrays being complete, Wei Yan rode out and vilified the rebels, shouting, "O malcontents! Be quick to surrender!"

Instead, E Huan galloped out and fought with Wei Yan. After a few bouts, Wei Yan seemed to be bested and fled. But this was only a ruse. As E Huan followed, the gongs clanged and from left and right poured out Zhang Yi and Wang Ping. Wei Yan turned around, and the three generals besieged and captured E Huan.

He was taken to the tent of Zhuge Liang, who bade his attendants loose his bonds, gave him wine, and comforted him.

Then, Zhuge Liang asked, "To whom do you belong?"

E Huan replied, "I am one of the generals under Gao Ding."

“I know Gao Ding as a loyal and good sort, but he has been led away by this Yong Kai. Now I shall release you, but you are to bring Gao Ding to his senses and see to it that he comes to surrender and avoids grave disaster.”

E Huan thanked him and withdrew. He went to his own side and soon saw Gao Ding. He told Gao Ding what Zhuge Liang had said, and Zhuge Liang's kindly feeling deeply affected Gao Ding.

Next day, Yong Kai came over to Gao Ding's camp to visit him.

After the exchange of salutations, Yong Kai asked, “How did E Huan manage to return?”

“Zhuge Liang released him out of pure kindness,” replied Gao Ding.

“This is a ruse of his to separate you from me: he wishes to make us enemies.”

Gao Ding almost believed this, too, and he was much perplexed.

Just then, the watchers reported that the leaders of Shu had come up and were offering battle. So Yong Kai led out thirty thousand troops to take up the challenge. But after the third encounter, he fled. Wei Yan pursued him and smote for a distance of seven miles.

Next day, Yong Kai challenged, but the soldiers of Shu refused to fight, and remained within their lines for three days. On the fourth day, Yong Kai and Gao Ding divided their troops into two parts and came to attack the camp.

Now Zhuge Liang had told Wei Yan to wait for this double attack, and so when it came to pass, both divisions fell into an ambush and suffered great losses, many being killed and more captured. The prisoners were taken to the camp, and the soldiers belonging to the two leaders, Yong Kai and Gao Ding, were confined separately. Then Zhuge Liang told the

soldiers to let it be known that only those belonging to Gao Ding would be spared, the others would be put to death. When time had been given for this story to spread among the prisoners, Yong Kai's troops were brought up to the commander's tent.

"Whose soldiers were you?" asked Zhuge Liang.

"Gao Ding's," cried they all, falsely. Then they were all pardoned, and, after being given wine and food, they were taken to the frontier and set free.

Next, the real soldiers of Gao Ding were brought forward, and the same question was put to them.

"We all really belong to Gao Ding's command," said they. In like manner, they were pardoned and refreshed with wine and food.

Then Zhuge Liang addressed them, saying, "Yong Kai has just sent a messenger to ask that he may surrender, and he offers to bring with him the heads of Gao Ding and Zhu Bao as a proof of merit. But I will not receive him, and you, since you are Gao Ding's soldiers, shall be released and allowed to return to him. But let there be no ingratitude and fighting again, for if there is, I certainly will not pardon you next time."

So they thanked their liberator and went away. As soon as they reached their own camp, they told the whole story. Then Gao Ding sent a spy to the camp of Yong Kai to find out what was doing. There, the spy met those who had been released; they were all talking about Zhuge Liang's kindness, and many of them were inclined to desert their own camp for the other.

Although this seemed very satisfactory, Gao Ding did not feel convinced, and he sent another man to Zhuge Liang's camp to try to verify the rumor. But this man was captured and taken before the Commander-in-Chief, who pretended that he thought the spy belonged to Yong Kai.

Zhuge Liang said to him, "Why has your leader failed to send me the heads of Gao Ding and Zhu Bao as he promised? You lot are not very clever, and what are you come to spy out?"

The soldier muttered and mumbled in confusion.

But Zhuge Liang gave the man wine and food and then wrote a letter which he handed to the spy, saying, "You give this letter to your commander, Yong Kai, and tell him to get the job done quickly."

The spy took the letter and got away. As soon as he reached camp, he gave the letter to Gao Ding and also the message.

Gao Ding read the missive and became very angry.

"I have ever been true to him, and yet he wants to kill me. It is hard to be either friendly or reasonable."

Then he decided to take E Huan into his confidence, and called him.

E Huan was much prejudiced in favor of Zhuge Liang and said, "Zhuge Liang is a most benevolent man, and it would be ill to turn our backs upon him. It is Yong Kai's fault that we are now rebels, and our best course would be to slay him and betake ourselves to Zhuge Liang."

"How could it be done?" asked Gao Ding.

"Invite him to a banquet. If he refuses, it means he is a traitor, and then you can attack him in front while I will lie in wait behind his camp to capture him as he runs away."

They agreed to try this plan. The banquet was prepared and Yong Kai invited. But as Yong Kai's mind was full of suspicion from what his returned soldiers had said, he would not come. That night, as soon as darkness fell, Gao Ding attacked his camp.

Now the soldiers who had been released were imbued with the goodness of Gao Ding, all quite ready to help him fight. On the other hand,

Yong Kai's troops mutinied against him, and so Yong Kai mounted his steed and fled. Before he had gone far, he found his road blocked by the cohort under E Huan, who galloped out with his halberd and confronted the fugitive. Yong Kai could not defend himself, and was struck down. E Huan decapitated him. As soon as they knew he was dead, his troops joined themselves to Gao Ding, who then went and surrendered to Zhuge Liang.

Zhuce Liang received Gao Ding sitting in state in his tent, but at once ordered the lictors to decapitate Gao Ding.

But Gao Ding said, "Influenced by your kindness, Sir, I have brought the head of my colleague as a proof of the sincerity of my surrender. Why should I die?"

"You come with false intent. Do you think you can hoodwink me?" said Zhuge Liang, laughing.

"What proof have you that I am false?"

Zhuce Liang drew a letter from his box, and said, "Zhu Bao sent this secretly to say he wished to surrender, and he said you and Yong Kai were sworn friends to death. How could you suddenly change your feelings and slay him? That is how I know your treachery."

"Zhu Bao only tried to make trouble," cried Gao Ding, kneeling.

Zhuce Liang still refused to believe him, and said, "I cannot believe you without more solid proof. If you would slay Zhu Bao, I could take that as proving you were sincere in your surrender."

"Do not doubt me. What if I go and capture this man?"

"If you did that, my doubts would be set at rest."

Thereupon, Gao Ding and his subordinate, E Huan, led away their troops to the camp of Zhu Bao. When they were about three miles from his

camp, Zhu Bao appeared with a cohort. As soon as they recognized each other, Zhu Bao hastily came forward to parley.

But Gao Ding cried out to him, “Why did you write a letter to the Prime Minister and so intrigue with him to get me killed?”

Zhu Bao stared open-mouthed and could not reply. Then E Huan rode out from behind his chief and struck Zhu Bao with his halberd so that he fell to the ground.

Thereupon, Gao Ding shouted, “The soldiers should either yield or be slain!”

And they yielded in a body.

Gao Ding then went back to Zhuge Liang and offered the head of the man just slain.

Zhugge Liang laughed again. “I have made you kill both these as a proof of loyalty.”

Then he made Gao Ding Governor of Yizhou and chief of three territories, while E Huan was made General. Thus, the three rebel divisions were disposed of and troubled the peace no more.

Governor Wang Kang of Yongchang then came out of the city and welcomed Zhuge Liang.

When Zhuge Liang had made his entry into that city, he called Wang Kang and asked, “Who has aided you in the defense of this city?”

The Governor said, “The safety of this city is due entirely to Lu Kai.”

So Lu Kai was called. He came and bowed.

Zhugge Liang said, “Long since, I heard of you as a remarkable person of this area. We are greatly indebted to you for its safety. Now we wish to conquer the Mans. Have you any advice to offer?”

Lu Kai then produced a map of the country and presented it, saying, "From the time of my appointment, I have felt certain that the southern tribespeople would rise against you, and so I sent secret agents to map out the country and find the strategic points. From that information, I prepared this map, which I call 'The Plan to Subdue the Mans.' I beg you, Sir, to accept it, as it may be of use."

Zhuge Liang was very glad. He took Lu Kai into his service as Adviser and Army Guide. With Lu Kai's help, Zhuge Liang advanced and penetrated deeply into the country.

While the army was advancing, there came a messenger from the court. When he appeared, Zhuge Liang saw it was Ma Su, and he was clothed in white. He was in mourning for his brother, Ma Liang, who had just died.

He said, "I come by special command of the Emperor with gifts of wine and silks for the soldiers."

When the proper ceremonies on receipt of a mandate from the Emperor had been performed, and the gifts distributed as instructed, Ma Su was asked to remain to talk over matters.

Zhuge Liang said, "I have His Majesty's command to conquer these Mans. I hear you have some advice to offer, and I should be pleased if you would instruct me."

"Yes. I have one thing to say that may be worth thinking over. These people refuse to recognize our supremacy because they think their country is distant and difficult. If you should overcome them today, tomorrow they would revolt. Wherever your army marches, they are overcome and submit, but the day you withdraw the army and attack Cao Pi, they will renew their attack. In arms even, it is best to attack hearts rather than cities; to fight

with sentiment is better than to fight with weapons. It will be well if you can win them over.”

“You read my inmost thoughts,” said Zhuge Liang.

Then Ma Su was retained with the army as Adviser, and the army marched on.

When the King of the Mans, Meng Huo, heard how cleverly Zhuge Liang had got rid of Yong Kai, he called together the leaders of the “Three Ravines” to discuss matters. The chief of the first Ravine was Jinhuan Sanjie, of the second Dongtuna, and of the third Ahuinan.

These having come to the King’s place, he said to them, “Zhuge Liang of Shu and his Grand Army have invaded our country, and we must exert our united strength to drive out the invaders. You three must lead your forces, and whoever conquers the enemy shall be chief of chiefs.”

It was arranged that Jinhuan Sanjie should march in the center division, Dongtuna on the left, and Ahuinan on the right. Each division had fifty thousand tribesmen.

When the scouts made out that the Man armies were coming, they at once told Zhuge Liang, who called Zhao Yun and Wei Yan to his side, but gave them no orders.

Next, he sent for Wang Ping and Ma Zhong, and said to them, “I cannot send Zhao Yun and Wei Yan against the Mans because they do not know the country. You two are to go, one against each wing, and the two

veteran warriors shall support you. Get your troops ready and start tomorrow at dawn.”

Wang Ping and Ma Zhong took the orders and went out.

Then Zhang Yi and Zhang Ni were given orders: “You two are to march against the center army. You are to act with Wang Ping and Ma Zhong tomorrow. I want to send Zhao Yun and Wei Yan, but I am still afraid they do not know the country well.”

Zhang Yi and Zhang Ni also received the orders and went out.

Zhao Yun and Wei Yan now began to feel hurt.

Noticing this, Zhuge Liang said, “I have no wish to pass you over, you two, but I fear that if you get too deep into the country and should fall victims to the Mans, it would have an ill effect on the others.”

“But what if we did know the geography of the country?” said Zhao Yun.

“All I say to you is to be careful how you do anything,” replied Zhuge Liang.

The two soldiers left and went together to the camp of Zhao Yun.

Zhao Yun said, “We are greatly ashamed at being put in the background because we do not know the country. We cannot bear this.”

“Then let us ride out and survey,” said his colleague. “Let us capture a few natives and make them show us the road, and let us defeat these tribesmen.”

They rode off. Before they had gone far, they saw a cloud of dust in the distance. Climbing a hill to get a better view, they saw a small party of mounted Mans coming toward them. The two waited till they were near and then suddenly burst out. The Mans, taken entirely by surprise, ran away all

but a few, who yielded themselves prisoners. The two warriors returned to camp.

The prisoners were given wine and food. When they had satisfied their hunger, they were questioned.

Said they, "The camp of Chief Jinhuan Sanjie is just in front, just by the entrance to the mountains. Near the camp, running east and west, is the Five Valleys. The camps of the other two chiefs, Dongtuna and Ahuinan, are behind."

Having listened to this information, Zhao Yun and Wei Yan got together five thousand troops, took the captured men as guides, and marched out about the second watch. It was a clear night, and the moon gave light to march by.

The first camp was reached about the fourth watch. The Man soldiers were already awake and preparing their morning meal, as they intended to attack at daylight. Suddenly, Zhao Yun and Wei Yan gave a signal of attack, and their troops poured forward. The vigorous and unexpected attack of the two generals threw the camp into confusion. Zhao Yun fought into the center of the camp and encountered Jinhuan Sanjie. Both leaders engaged, and Zhao Yun slew Jinhuan Sanjie by a spear thrust. Then Zhao Yun dismounted and cut off the head of the Chief.

Next, Wei Yan took half the force and went west to the second camp, while Zhao Yun marched east to the third one. By the time they reached the camps, day had dawned. The Mans also had news of Wei Yan's coming and drew up the camp to oppose. But when they had gotten clear, there was a great uproar behind them at the stockade gates, and confusion followed. The reason was the arrival of Wang Ping. Between the two bodies, the Mans were beaten. Their Chief, Dongtuna, forced his way out and got away. Wei Yan's soldiers followed, but they could not catch him.

When Zhao Yun led his troops east to attack the third camp in the rear, Ma Zhong made an attack on the front. They scored a success, but the Chief Ahuinan escaped.

They returned to headquarters, and Zhuge Liang said, "The three parties of Mans have fled, and Dongtuna and Ahuinan escaped. Where is the head of Jinhuan Sanjie?"

Zhao Yun produced it. At the same time, he reported: "Dongtuna and Ahuinan escaped by abandoning their horses and going over the hills. Therefore, they could not be followed."

"They are already prisoners," said Zhuge Liang with a laugh.

The fighting men could not credit it. But soon after, Zhang Ni brought out Dongtuna; and Zhang Yi, Ahuinan.

When the Shu leaders expressed surprise and admiration, Zhuge Liang said, "I had studied the map and knew the positions of the camps. I taunted Zhao Yun and Wei Yan into making a supreme effort into the camp of Jinhuan Sanjie. At the same time, I sent other forces under Wang Ping and Ma Zhong, with the purpose to support Zhao Yun and Wei Yan and to force Dongtuna and Ahuinan to flee. I felt certain the two chiefs would run away along those small roads, and I set soldiers under Zhang Ni and Zhang Yi on those roads to wait for them. They also were supported."

They all bowed, saying, "The Prime Minister's calculations are divine and incomprehensible."

The two captive chiefs were then called. As soon as they appeared, Zhuge Liang loosed their bonds, gave them refreshments, and released them, bidding them offend no more. They thanked him for their liberty, and disappeared along a byroad.

Then Zhuge Liang said to his generals, "Tomorrow, Meng Huo will come in person to make an attack. We shall probably capture him."

Then he summoned Zhao Yun and Wei Yan and gave them orders. They left, each with five thousand troops. Next, he sent Wang Ping and Guan Suo away with instructions. And then he and other officers sat in his tent to wait for the result.

The King of the Mans was sitting in his tent when the scouts told him that his three chiefs had been captured and their armies scattered. It made him very angry, and he quickly got his army ready to march. Soon he met Wang Ping and Guan Suo, and, when the armies were arrayed, Wang Ping rode out to the front, saber in his hand. The flaunting banners of the array formation of his foes then opened out, and he saw their ranks. Many generals were on horseback on both sides. In the middle was the King, who advanced to the front. He wore a golden, inlaid headdress; his belt bore a lion's face as clasp; his boots had pointed toes and were green; he rode a frizzy-haired horse the color of a red hare; and he carried at his waist a pair of swords chased with pine amber.

He looked haughtily at his foes, and then, turning to his generals, said, "It has always been said that Zhuge Liang is a wonderful strategist, but I see that is false. Look at this array with its banners all in confusion and the ranks in disorder. There is not a weapon among all the swords and spears better than ours. If I had only realized this before, I would have fought them long ago. Who dares go out and capture a Shu general to show them what sort of warriors we are?"

At once a general rode toward the leader Wang Ping. His name was Mangyachang. His weapon was a huge headsman's sword, and he rode a dun pony. Riding up to Wang Ping, the two engaged.

Wang Ping only fought a short time, and then fled. Meng Huo at once ordered his troops on in quick pursuit, and the troops of Shu retreated seven miles or so before the Mans were near enough to fight. Just as the Mans thought their enemies were in their power, a great shouting arose and two cohorts appeared, Zhang Ni from the left and Zhang Yi from the right, and attacked. The Mans could not retreat, and as the force under Wang Ping and Guan Suo also turned upon them, the Mans were surrounded and lost the day. Meng Huo and some of his generals fought their way out and made for the Brocade Mountains. The troops of Shu followed and forced them forward, and presently there appeared, in front, Zhao Yun.

Meng Huo hastily changed his route to go deeper into the mountains, but Zhao Yun's soldiers spread around, and the Mans could not make a stand. Here, many were captured. Meng Huo and a few horsemen got away into a valley, which, however, soon became too narrow for the horses to advance. Meng Huo then left his horse and crawled up the mountains, but very soon he fell upon Wei Yan, who had been sent with five hundred troops to lie in wait in that very valley. Meng Huo tried to struggle but soon was captured.

The King and his followers were taken to the main camp, where Zhuge Liang was waiting with wine and meat ready for the captives. But his tent was now guarded by soldiers all well armed with snow-glittering weapons, beside the lictors bearing the golden axes—a present from the Emperor—and other insignia of rank. The feather-hatted drummers and clarion players were in front and behind, and the Imperial Guards were extended on both sides. The whole was very imposing and awe-inspiring.

Zhuge Liang was seated at the top of it all and watched the captives as they came forward in crowds. When they were all assembled, he ordered their bonds to be loosed, and then he addressed them.

“You are all simple and well-disposed people who have been led into trouble by Meng Huo. I know your fathers and mothers, your brothers and wives and your children, are anxiously watching from the doorways for your return, and they are cut to dear suffering that the news of defeat and capture has reached their ears. They are weeping bitter tears for you. And so I will set you all free to go home and comfort them.”

After they had been given food and wine and a present of grain, he sent them all away. They went off grateful for the kindness shown them, and they wept as they thanked Zhuge Liang.

Then the guards were told to bring the King before the tent. He came, bound, being hustled forward. He knelt in front of the Commander-in-Chief.

Zhuge Liang said, “Why did you rebel after the generous treatment you have received from our Emperor?”

“The two River Lands belonged to others, and your lord took it from them by force, and gave himself the title of Emperor. My people have lived here for ages, and you and your cohorts invaded my country without the least excuse. How can you talk of rebellion to me?”

“You are my prisoner. Will you submit or are you still contumacious?”

“Why should I submit? You happened to find me in a narrow place. That is all.”

“If I release you, what then?”

“If you release me I shall return, and when I have set my army in order, I shall come to fight you again. However, if you catch me once more,

I will submit.”

The King’s bonds were loosed. He was clothed and refreshed, given a horse and caparisons, and sent with a guide to his own camp.

Once more, the captured chieftain is let go,
To yield tribesmen are ever slow.

Further results of this war will be related in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXI

CHAPTER 88

CROSSING THE RIVER LU: THE MAN KING IS BOUND THE SECOND TIME;
RECOGNIZING A PRETEND SURRENDER: MENG HUO IS CAPTURED
THE THIRD TIME.

The officers did not approve of the release of the King of the Mans, and they came to the tent of Zhuge Liang and said, "Meng Huo is the most important personage of all the Mans, and his capture is the key to restoring order in the south. Why then, O Minister, did you release him?"

"I can capture him just as easily as I can get something out of my pocket. What I want to do is to overcome and win his heart, so that peace may follow of itself."

They listened, but they had no great confidence in the success of the policy of conciliation.

In the meantime, Meng Huo had reached the River Lu, and there he fell in with some of his defeated leaders, who were trying to get news of their King's fate.

They were surprised, but glad, to see him, and asked, "How was Your Highness able to get back?"

The King lied, saying, "They confined me in a tent, and I broke out in the night. I slew more than ten guards and ran. And then I met one of their sentries, killed him, and that is how I got this horse."

They never doubted his word, and very joyfully they hurried him over the river to a camping place. Then all the notables assembled from the various ravines, and the soldiers that had escaped death were mustered and got into shape as a fighting force.

The two leaders in the late campaign, Dongtuna and Ahuinan, were in one of the ravines, and Meng Huo sent to ask them to come. They were afraid, but they could not disobey, and they came with an escort.

When all had assembled, the King proclaimed as follows: "I know Zhuge Liang is too full of ruses for us to conquer him in a fight; we would only fall victims to other base devices. However, we must remember that his soldiers have marched far and the weather is sultry, which are factors in our favor. Beside, the River Lu is our rampart. We will have boats and rafts on the south side, and we will build a mud wall. With such good defenses, we can afford to wait and see what the enemy intends."

His speech met with approval, and his plan was carried out. The wall was supported by the hills and strengthened by fighting turrets, upon which were placed large bows and crossbows and arrows and stones. The defenses looked as if they were permanent. Moreover, each ravine sent supplies in plenty. And having made these preparations, Meng Huo felt comfortable and safe.

Zhuge Liang had advanced, and his leading division was now close to the river.

Spies came back to report: "No boats or rafts can be found to cross, and the current is too strong to think of fording. Beside, we can see the

formidable defenses on the farther bank, the mud wall and the turrets all fully manned.”

The weather was burning hot, for it was the fifth month, and the soldiers could not tolerate their armor nor even their clothing.

When Zhuge Liang had inspected the river, he returned to his tent and assembled his officers, to whom he read this order: “The enemy is securely established on the south bank, ready to repel our attack. Yet, having come so far, we cannot return empty-handed. For the present, you will all seek what shelter you can find in the forests, and rest and refresh your troops.”

Then he sent Lu Kai to a distance to select a cool stretch of thirty miles, and there he made four stockades. Within the stockades, he built huts for the soldiers and sheds for the horses, so that they were sheltered from the intense heat. The four camps were stationed by Wang Ping, Zhang Ni, Zhang Yi, and Guan Suo.

However, Jiang Wan observed these shelters and went to Zhuge Liang, saying, “These shelters of Lu Kai are very unsuitable. He has made the same mistake as that which led to the defeat of the First Ruler at the hands of Wu. He has not taken into account the surroundings of the stockades; if the Mans should come over and start a fire, there could be no rescue.”

“Do not anticipate trouble,” said the Commander-in-Chief, smiling. “I have provided against all such dangers.”

Jiang Wan did not know what the chief meant to do, but he said no more. Then Ma Dai arrived from the River Lands, and he brought summer medicines and further supplies of grain. He saw Zhuge Liang, and then proceeded to distribute the supplies he had brought according to orders.

Then, Zhuge Liang said, “What force have you brought?”

“Three thousand,” replied Ma Dai.

“My people are weary and worn out. I want to use yours. You have no objections?”

“Of course not. They are equally loyal troops. They are ready even to die for you if you wish.”

“This Meng Huo is established on the river, and we have no means of crossing. But I am anxious to intercept his supplies so that his troops may mutiny.”

“How can you do it?”

“Some fifty miles lower down the River Lu, there is a place called Shakou, where the current is slow and shallow because of sand. You could cross there on rafts. I wish you and your soldiers to cross and cut the road of supplies. After that, you are to arrange with the two leaders—Dongtuna and Ahuinan—whose lives I spared, to be your allies on the inside, and we shall succeed.”

Ma Dai went off gladly enough, and marched his troops to Shakou, where they set about the crossing at once. And as the water was shallow, they did not trouble to make rafts, but just tucked up their clothes and waded in. But halfway across, the men began to fall over, and when they had been rescued and taken to the bank, many of them began to bleed from the nose and mouth and died. In great alarm, Ma Dai sent hasty messages to Zhuge Liang, who called in the native guides and asked what this meant.

They told him, “It happens so every year. In the hot season, poisonous miasma collects over the waters of the River Lu, especially during the heat of the day. Anyone who drinks the water will surely die. Travelers who wish to cross have to wait till night because the cooler waters do not breathe out the poisonous vapors. Further, the crossing should be attempted on a full stomach.”

Zhuge Liang bade the local guides point out the best crossing place. He sent five hundred well-seasoned soldiers to Ma Dai to lash together poles into rafts at Shakou, and in the night, the crossing was safely accomplished. Further, the guides then led two thousand men of Shu over to where the grain road of the Mans led through a narrow valley, called Jiashan Gorge, where, for part of the way, only single file was possible, as the road was only wide enough for a soldier and a horse.

Ma Dai at once occupied this valley and stationed a force there. And a stockade was put up with tents inside. Presently, a convoy of grain came along, and it was captured, more than a hundred wagons. The guards ran off to Meng Huo's great camp and told him.

Meng Huo, thinking all was safe during the hot season, was enjoying himself. Wine and music were the order of the day, and military matters were far from his thoughts. In his cups he admitted Zhuge Liang was wily, but said his army had nothing to fear.

Said he, "If I attempt to oppose Zhuge Liang, I shall certainly fall a victim to some ruse of his. However, my waiting policy is a safe one. With our defenses, and the river to back them, we can wait for the heat to overcome these men of Shu, who cannot stand the hot season. They will have to retreat, and then we can harass them. And we will capture this Zhuge Liang."

He lay back and laughed at the thought.

However, one chief, more prudent than the others, stood forth and said, "Remember the shallows at Shakou. It would be very serious if the soldiers of Shu got across there secretly. It ought to be guarded."

"You belong to these areas. Do you not know that I want the enemy to try to get across there? Why, they will all perish in the water."

“But what if the natives tell them to cross only in the night?”

“Do not be so anxious,” said Meng Huo. “Our own people will not help the enemy that far.”

It was just then that intelligence came: “The troops of Shu, unknown in number, have crossed the river and, moreover, have seized the Jiashan Gorge. The flags show the words ‘General Who Pacifies The North, Ma Dai.’”

Meng Huo affected indifference. “This sort of fellow is not worth talking about,” said he.

He sent General Mangyachang with three thousand troops to recapture the gorge and reopen the grain road.

When Ma Dai saw the Man soldiers approaching, he placed two thousand troops in front of the hills and drew up the troops in formal array. Then Mangyachang rode out to give battle. This was but a small engagement, as the general of the tribespeople fell at the first stroke of Ma Dai’s sword. The Mans ran away at once.

They returned to the King’s camp and told him what had happened. Whereupon, he called up all his generals and asked for another to go up against Ma Dai.

“I will go,” cried Dongtuna.

The King gave him three thousand troops. After he had gone, Meng Huo thought it would be wise to keep others from crossing the river. So he sent a force of three thousand under Ahuinan to guard Shakou.

Dongtuna duly arrived at the gorge and made a camp. Ma Dai came out to meet him. Among the soldiers in his cohort were some who recognized the leader of the Mans and told Ma Dai certain things about how he had been captured and liberated.

So Ma Dai galloped toward him, shouting, "O you ingrate! How could you forget your debt to the Prime Minister? Have you known no shame?"

Dongtuna was very greatly ashamed and turned red in the face, and turned his horse before striking a blow. Ma Dai followed and fell on, slaying many of the Mans. Then both sides withdrew.

Dongtuna went back and told the King that Ma Dai was too strong for him.

But Meng Huo was angry, and cried, "You are a traitor! I know Zhuge Liang was good to you, and that is why you would not fight."

Meng Huo ordered Dongtuna out to execution. However, the notables and chiefs interceded, and the death penalty was remitted, but the unhappy leader was severely beaten, one hundred strokes with the heavy staff.

The chiefs were mostly on the side of the beaten general and against the King's policy.

They went to the tent of Dongtuna and said, "Though we live in the Man country, we have never had any thoughts of rebellion against the Imperial Government, nor has the Middle Kingdom ever encroached upon our land. We must own that Meng Huo's superior power forced us into this rising, and we could not help ourselves. Zhuge Liang is too clever for us, and no one can guess what he may do. Even Cao Cao and Sun Quan fear him; how much more must we? Moreover, we have received kindness at his hands and owe him our lives. We ought to show our gratitude. Now, let us at all risks slay this Meng Huo and submit to Zhuge Liang so that our people may not suffer."

Dongtuna said, "I do not know your inner sentiments."

At this, all those who had been prisoners and released cried with one voice, "We desire to go to Meng Huo."

Thereupon, Dongtuna took in his hand a sharp sword, placed himself at the head of more than a hundred malcontents, and rushed into the great camp. At that moment, Meng Huo was, as usual, intoxicated and lay in his tent. The mutineers rushed in. They found two generals on guard.

“You also received kindness from Zhuge Liang and ought to repay it,” cried Dongtuna.

They replied, “You do not have to slay him. Let us carry him a prisoner to the Prime Minister.”

So they bound the King securely, took him down to the river, and crossed in a boat to the northern bank. There they halted, while they sent a messenger to Zhuge Liang.

Now Zhuge Liang knew what had been happening, and he had issued orders for every camp to prepare their weapons. All being ready, he told the chiefs to bring up their prisoner and bade the others return to their camps. Dongtuna went first and told the matter to Zhuge Liang, who praised his zeal and gave him presents. Then he retired with the chiefs, and the executioners brought in Meng Huo.

“You said once before that if you were captured again, you would give in,” said Zhuge Liang, smiling. “Now will you yield?”

“This capture is not your work,” replied Meng Huo. “It is the work of these minions of mine who want to hurt me. I will not yield on this.”

“If I free you again, what then?”

“I am a Man, and so I am not wholly ignorant of war. If you, O Minister, let me return to my ravines, I will muster another army and fight a decisive battle with you. If you capture me again, then I will incline my heart and own myself beaten and yield. I will not go back on my promise again.”

“If you refuse to yield next time you are captured, I shall hardly pardon you.”

At Zhuge Liang’s orders the cords were loosed and refreshments were brought for the prisoner.

“Remember,” said Zhuge Liang, “I have never failed yet. I have never failed to win a battle or to take a city I have assaulted. Why do you Mans not yield?”

Meng Huo only nodded his head; he said nothing. After the wine, Zhuge Liang and Meng Huo rode round the camps together, and the King saw all the arrangements and the piles of stores and heaps of weapons.

And after the inspection, Zhuge Liang said, “You are silly not to yield to me. You see my veteran soldiers, my able generals, my stores of all kinds and war gear. How can you hope to prevail against me? If you will yield, I will inform the Emperor, and you shall retain your kingship, and your sons and grandsons shall succeed as perpetual guardians of the Man country. Do you not think it would be well?”

Meng Huo replied, “If I did yield, the people of my valleys would not be content. If you release me once more, I will see to it that my own people keep the peace and bring them round to unanimity of feeling, and then they will not oppose any more.”

Zhuce Liang was glad, and they returned to the main camp to feast until dusk, when Meng Huo took his leave. Zhuge Liang ordered a craft and went to see him across the River Lu.

But Meng Huo’s first act on his return to his own camp was to send one of his people to Dongtuna’s and Ahuinan’s camps, and pretend to ask them to come to meet a messenger from Zhuge Liang. When the two generals came, Meng Huo ordered assassins who had been placed hidden to

do away with the two leaders. Their corpses were thrown into a gully. Then he sent his friends to guard the most important strategic points, while he marched to fight a battle with Ma Dai. But when he got near the valley, he saw no signs of the enemy.

He questioned the inhabitants, and they said, "The Shu army, with all their stores, recrossed the river last night and joined the main body in the northern bank."

Meng Huo then returned to his own ravine and discussed matters with his brother, Meng You, saying, "I know all the details of the enemy's force from what I saw in their camp."

And Meng Huo gave his brother certain instructions, which Meng You at once began to carry out. Meng You loaded a hundred men with gold and jewels and pearls and ivory and rhinoceros horn, crossed the River Lu, and was on his way to the main camp of the Shu army when he heard the sound of drums and a cohort under Ma Dai poured out to stop him. Meng You did not expect to meet an enemy, and was surprised. But Ma Dai only asked what he had come for. And when he had heard, Meng You was detained while a message was sent to Zhuge Liang.

The messenger arrived while a council was in progress, the matter under discussion being how to pacify the Mans.

They announced, "The brother of Meng Huo has come bearing gifts of gold and pearls."

Zhugé Liang turned to Ma Su, saying, "Know you why this man has come?"

"I dare not say plainly, but let me write it," said Ma Su.

"Write it, then."

So Ma Su wrote and handed the paper to his chief, who had no sooner read it than he clapped his hands with joy, crying, "What you say is exactly what I think. But you may know I have already made arrangements for the capture of Meng Huo."

Then Zhao Yun was called, and some orders were whispered into his ear. Next Wei Yan came, and he also went off with secret orders. Wang Ping, Ma Zhong, and Guan Suo also came, and left with particular instructions. All these things done, the bearer of gifts was called.

Meng You came and bowed low at the door of the tent, saying, "The brother of my house, Meng Huo, having received great kindness at your hands in sparing his life, feels bound to offer a paltry gift. He has presumed to collect a few pearls and some gold and other trifling jewels by way of something to give your soldiers. And hereafter he will send tribute to your Emperor."

"Where is your brother at this moment?" asked Zhuge Liang.

"Having been the recipient of your great bounty, he has gone to the Silver Pit Ravine to collect some treasures. He will soon return."

"How many soldiers have you brought?"

"Only about a hundred. I should not dare to bring any large number. They are just porters."

They were brought in for Zhuge Liang's inspection. They had blue eyes and swarthy faces, auburn hair and purple beards. They wore earrings, their hair was fuzzy, and they went barefoot. They were tall and powerful.

Zhuce Liang made them sit down, and bade his generals press them to drink and treat them well and compliment them.

Meanwhile, Meng Huo was anxious about the reception that would be given to his brother and the treatment of his gifts, so he sat in his tent

expecting the messenger at any moment. Then two men came, and he questioned them eagerly.

They said, "The presents have been accepted, and even the porters have been invited to drink in the tent and have been regaled with beef and flesh in plenty. O King, your brother sends the news that all will be ready at the second watch for the attack. He will support you from within."

This was pleasing news, and Meng Huo prepared his thirty thousand troops ready to march out to the camp. They were divided into three divisions.

The King called up his chieftains and notables, and said, "Let each army carry the means of making fire, and as soon as they arrive, let a light be shown as a signal. I am coming to the main camp to capture Zhuge Liang."

With these orders they marched, and they crossed the River Lu at sunset. The King, with a hundred generals as escort, pressed on at once toward the main camp of Shu. They met with no opposition. They even found the main gate open, and Meng Huo and his party rode straight in. But the camp was a desert; not a soldier was visible.

Meng Huo rode right up to the large tent and pushed open the flap. It was brilliantly lighted with lamps, and lying about under their light were his brother and all his men, dead drunk. Zhuge Liang had ordered Ma Su and Lu Kai to entertain Meng You and his men with wine and dance performances. The wine they had been pressed to drink while the plays were going on had been heavily drugged, and they had fallen down almost as soon as they had swallowed it. One or two who had recovered a little could not speak: they only pointed to their mouths.

Meng Huo then saw that he had been the simple victim of another ruse. However, he picked up his brother and the others and started off to

return to his main army.

But as he turned, torches began to flash out and drums to beat. The Mans were frightened and took to their heels. But they were pursued, and the pursuing cohort was led by Wang Ping. The King bore away to the left to escape, but again a cohort appeared in front of him: Wei Yan was there. Meng Huo tried the other side, and was stopped by Zhao Yun. He was in a trap and attacked on three sides with no fourth to escape by. He abandoned everything, making one wild rush for the River Lu.

As he reached the river bank, he saw a bark on the river with Man soldiers on board. Here was safety. He hailed the boat and jumped on board as soon as it touched the bank. No sooner had he embarked than suddenly he was seized and bound. The boat, which Ma Dai had provided and prepared, was part of the general plan, and the Man soldiers therein were Ma Dai's soldiers disguised.

Many of Meng Huo's troops accepted the chance of surrender held out by Zhuge Liang, who soothed them and treated them well and did not injure one of them.

The remains of the conflagration were stamped out, and in a short time Ma Dai brought along his prisoner. At the same time, Zhao Yun led in his brother, Meng You. Wei Yan, Ma Su, Wang Ping, and Guan Suo also brought their prisoners, chiefs or notables, to the camp of the Prime Minister.

Zhuce Liang looked at the King and laughed.

"That was but a shallow ruse of yours to send your brother with presents to pretend to submit to me. Did you really think I should not see through it? But here you are once more in my power. Now do you yield?"

“I am a prisoner owing to the gluttony of my brother and the power of your poisonous drugs. If I had only played his part myself and left him to support me with soldiers, I would have succeeded. I am the victim of fate and not of my own incapacity. No, I will not yield.”

“Remember: this is the third time. Why not?” said Zhuge Liang.

Meng Huo dropped his head and made no answer.

“Ah, well. I will let you go once more,” said Zhuge Liang.

“O Minister, if you will let me and my brother go, we will get together our family and clients and fight you once more. If I am caught that time, then I will confess myself beaten to the ground, and that shall be the end.”

“Certainly I shall scarcely pardon you next time,” said Zhuge Liang. “You had better be careful. Diligently tackle your *Book of Strategy*; look over your list of confidants. If you can apply a good plan at the proper moment, you will not have any need for late regrets.”

Meng Huo and his brother and all the chiefs were released from their bonds. They thanked Zhuge Liang for his clemency and went away.

By the time the released prisoners had gotten back to the river, the army of Shu had crossed to the farther side and had captured the Man defenses, the Shu flags fluttering in the breeze. As Meng Huo passed the camp, he saw Ma Dai sitting in state.

Ma Dai pointed his sword at the King as he passed, and said, “Next time you are caught, you will not escape.”

When Meng Huo came to his own camp, he found Zhao Yun in possession and all in order. Zhao Yun was seated beneath the large banner,

with his sword drawn.

And as the King passed, Zhao Yun also said, "Do not presume on the kindness of the Prime Minister because you have been generously treated."

Meng Huo grunted and passed on. Just as he was going over the frontier hills, he saw Wei Yan and a company drawn up on the slopes.

Wei Yan shouted, "See to it: we have got into the inmost recesses of your country and have taken all your defensive positions. Yet you are foolish enough to hold out. Next time you are caught, you will be quite destroyed. There will be no more pardons."

Meng Huo and his company ran away with their arms over their heads. Each one returned to his own ravine.



In the fifth moon, when the sun was fierce,
Marched the army into the wild land,
To the River Lu, bright and clear,
But deadly with miasma.
Zhuge Liang the leader cared not,
Pledged was he to subdue the south,
Thereby to repay the First Ruler's deference with
service.
Wherefore he attacked the Mans.
Yet seven times he freed their captured king.

After the crossing of the river, the Shu soldiers were feasted.

Then Zhuge Liang addressed his officers: “I let Meng Huo see our camp the second time he was our prisoner, because I wanted to tempt him into raiding it. He is something of a soldier, and I dangled our supplies and resources before his eyes, knowing he would try to burn them and that he would send his brother to pretend to submit that thereby he could get into our camp and have a chance to betray us. I have captured and released him three times, trying to win him over. I do not wish to do him any harm. I now explain my policy that you may understand I am not wasting your efforts and you are still to work your best for the government.”

They all bowed, and one said, “O Prime Minister, you are indeed perfect in everyone of the three gifts: wisdom, benevolence, and valor. Not even Lu Wang or Zhang Liang can equal you!”

Said Zhuge Liang, “How can I expect to equal our men of old? But my trust is in your strength, and together we shall succeed.”

This speech of their leader’s pleased them all mightily.

In the meantime, Meng Huo, upset at the three captures, hastened home to his own Silver Pit Ravine, whence he sent trusted friends with gifts to the Eight Nations and the Ninety-three Sees and all the Man quarters and clans to borrow shields and swords and warriors and braves. He got together one hundred thousand soldiers. They all assembled on an appointed day, amassing like clouds and sweeping in like mists gathering on the mountains, each and all obeying the commands of the King Meng Huo.

And the scouts knew it all, and they told Zhuge Liang, who said, “This is what I was waiting for, that the Mans should have an opportunity of knowing our might.”

Thereupon, he seated himself in a small carriage and went out to watch.

O let our enemy's courage glow
That our greater might may show.

The story of the campaign will be continued in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXI

CHAPTER 89

THE LORD OF WUXIANG USES THE FOURTH RUSE; THE KING OF THE
MANS IS CAPTURED THE FIFTH TIME.

Zhuge Liang's small carriage was escorted by only a few horsemen. Hearing that a sluggish river, the West Er River, lay in the way, and having no boat, Zhuge Liang bade the escort cut down some trees and make a raft. They did so, but the raft sank.

So Zhuge Liang turned to Lu Kai, who said, "There is, close by, a mountain covered with bamboo. I have heard of this bamboo, and some stalks are several spans in girth. We can make a bridge of them for the army to cross."

So thirty thousand soldiers were sent to the mountains, where they cut down many thousands of bamboo stalks and floated them down river. Then, at the narrowest point, they made a bridge a hundred spans or so in length. Next, the main army was brought down to the river and camped in line along the bank. The camp was protected by a moat, crossed by a floating bridge, and a mud rampart. On the south bank, they constructed three large stockades so as to prepare for the coming of the Man soldiers.

They had not long to wait. Meng Huo was hot with rage and came quickly with an army of one hundred thousand. As soon as he got near the river, he led out ten thousand fierce warriors, armed with big swords and shields, and challenged the first stockade.

Zhuge Liang went forth in simple state. He wore a silk cap and a crane-white robe and held in his hand a feather fan. He sat in a four-horse

carriage, and his generals rode right and left.

The King of the Mans was clad in mail of rhinoceros hide and wore a bright red casque. In his left hand he bore a shield, and his right gripped a sword. He rode a red ox. As soon as he saw his enemies, he opened his mouth and poured forth abuse and insults, while his warriors, huge and bold, darted to and fro, brandishing their weapons.

Zhuge Liang at once ordered the army to retire within the stockades and bar the gates. The Mans came close up to the stockade and pranced about naked, shouting in derision.

Within the stockade, the Shu generals grew very angry, and they went in a mob to see their leader. They all said, "We volunteer to march out and fight until death!"

But Zhuge Liang would not listen.

Presently, he said, "These men are not submissive to the Imperial Government and are naturally fierce and turbulent. In that mood we are no match for them. But all we have to do is to remain on guard for a few days till their ferocity has spent itself. Then I have a plan that will overcome them."

Days passed, and the army of Shu made no move; they only maintained the defensive. Zhuge Liang watched the besiegers from an eminence, and saw the first vigor of their advance give way to careless idleness.

Then Zhuge Liang called together his generals and asked, "Dare you give battle now?"

They all rejoiced at the suggestion. So he called them two by two or one by one and gave them secret orders. Zhao Yun and Wei Yan went in first. Wang Ping and Ma Zhong followed.

To Ma Dai he said, "I am going to abandon these stockades and retire north of the river. As soon as we have crossed, you are to cut loose the floating bridge and move it down the stream so that Zhao Yun and Wei Yan may cross."

To Zhang Yi he said, "You are to remain by the camp and light it up at night, as if it is still occupied. When Meng Huo pursues, then you are to cut off his retreat."

Last of all, Guan Suo was to escort Zhuge Liang's carriage.

The soldiers marched out of the camp that evening, and the lamps were hung up as usual. The Mans saw this from a distance and dared not attack. But the next morning at dawn, Meng Huo led his troops to the stockades and found all was quiet. He went close up and saw they were all empty and bare; not a soldier was there. Grain and fodder lay about among empty carts. All was in confusion, suggesting hasty departure.

"They have abandoned the camp," said Meng You to his brother. "But this is only a ruse."

Said Meng Huo, "I think that Zhuge Liang has important news from the capital that has made him leave without his baggage train like this. Either Wu has invaded or Wei has attacked. They left these lamps burning to make us think the camps were occupied, but they ran away leaving everything behind. If we pursue, we cannot go wrong."

So the King urged his army onward, himself heading the leading division. When they reached the bank of the West Er River, they saw on the farther side that the camps were all in order and the banners flying as usual like a brightly tinted cloud of silk. Along the bank stood a wall of cloth. They dared not attack.

Meng Huo said to his brother, “This means that Zhuge Liang fears lest we may pursue. That is only a temporary halt, and they will retire in a couple of days.”

The Mans camped on the river bank while they sent into the mountains to cut bamboo to make rafts. The boldest of the soldiers were placed in front of the camp till the rafts would be ready to cross. Little did Meng Huo suspect that the army of Shu was already within his borders.

One day when the wind blew violently, the Mans saw great flames spring up around them, and at the same time, the rolling of drums heralded an attack. The Mans, instead of going out to meet the enemy, began to force their way out of the Shu attack. Meng Huo became alarmed and fled with all his clans and dependents. They fought their way through and made a dash for their former camp.

Just as they reached it, there appeared a cohort of the enemy led by Zhao Yun. Meng Huo turned off west and sought refuge in the mountains. But he was fiercely attacked by a cohort under Ma Dai. With a small remnant of followers, he got away into a valley. Soon he saw, in the west, north, and south, clouds of smoke rising and the glow of torches, so that he was forced to halt. However, the east remained clear, and presently he fled in that direction. As he was crossing the mouth of a gully, he noticed a few horsemen outlined against a thick wood and saw they were escorting a small carriage. And in that carriage sat Zhuge Liang.

Zhuce Liang laughed, and said, “So the King of the Mans has gotten here! You have been defeated. I have waited for you a long time.”

Meng Huo angrily turned to his followers and said, “Thrice have I been the victim of this man’s base wiles and have been put to shame. Now chance has sent him across my path, and you must attack him with all your energy. Let us cut him to pieces and those with him.”

The Man horsemen, with Meng Huo shouting to encourage them, pushed forward in hot haste toward the wood. But in a few moments, they all stumbled and disappeared into some pits that had been dug in the way. And just then, Wei Yan emerged from the woods. One by one, the Mans were pulled out of the pits and bound tight with cords.

Zhuge Liang returned to his camp, where the captors of the King could bring in their prisoner. Zhuge Liang busied himself in soothing the other Man prisoners. Many of the notables and chiefs of the tributaries had betaken themselves to their own valleys and villages with their followers. Many of those who remained came over and yielded to Shu. They were well-fed and assured of safety, and allowed to go to their own. They went off gladly enough.

By and by, Zhang Yi brought up the King's brother, Meng You. Zhuge Liang reproached him for his brother's behavior.

"Your brother is a misguided simpleton. You ought to remonstrate with him and persuade him to change his course. Here you are: a captive for the fourth time. Are you not ashamed? How can you have the effrontery to look anyone in the face?"

A deep flush of shame passed over Meng You's face, and he threw himself to the earth, begging forgiveness.

Zhuge Liang said, "If I put you to death, it shall not be today. This time I pardon you, but you are to talk to your brother."

So Meng You was loosed from his bonds and allowed to get up. He went away weeping.

Very soon, Wei Yan brought up Meng Huo, and to him Zhuge Liang simulated great rage, saying, "What can you say now? You see you are in my hands again."

"I am again an unfortunate victim," said Meng Huo. "Once more I have blundered into your net, and now I shall die with unclosed eyes."

Zhuce Liang shouted to the lictors to take him away and behead him.

Meng Huo never blenched at the sentence, but he turned to his captor and said, "If you freed me only once more, I would wipe out the shame of all four captures."

Zhuce Liang smiled at the bold reply and bade the lictors loose his bonds, and the attendants served him with wine. Meng Huo was invited to sit in the commander's tent.

Said Zhuge Liang, "Four times you have been treated generously, and yet you are still defiant. Why?"

"Though I am what you call a barbarian, I would scorn to employ your vile ruses. And that is why I remain defiant."

"I have released you four times. Do you think you can give battle again?"

"If you catch me again, I will incline my heart to yield and I will give everything in my valley to reward your army. I will also take an oath not to cause any further trouble."

Zhuce Liang smiled but let him go. The King thanked him and left.

As soon as he was set at liberty, Meng Huo got together several thousand of his adherents and went away southward. Before long he fell in with his

brother, Meng You, who had gotten together an army and was on his way to avenge his brother. As soon as they saw each other, the brothers fell upon each other's necks and wept. They related their experiences.

Meng You said, "We cannot stand against the enemy. We have been defeated several times. Now, I think we had better go into the mountains and hide in some dark gully where they cannot find us. Those soldiers of Shu will never stand the summer heat. They must retire."

"Where can we hide?" asked his brother.

"I know a valley away southwest from us called 'Bald Dragon Valley', and the king, Duosi, is a friend of mine. Let us take refuge with him."

"Very well. Go and arrange it," said Meng Huo.

So Meng You went. When he got there and talked to the chief, King Duosi lost no time but came out with his soldiers to welcome Meng Huo, who then entered the ravine. After the exchange of salutations, Meng Huo explained his case.

Duosi said, "O King, rest content. If those men from the River Lands come here, I will see to it that not one goes home. And Zhuge Liang will meet his death here, too."

Naturally, Meng Huo was pleased. But he wanted to know how his host could feel so secure.

Duosi said, "In this ravine there are only two roads, the one you came by and another by the northwest. The road you traveled along is level and soft, and the waters are sweet. Humans and horses may both use it. But if we close the mouth of the ravine with a barricade, then no one, however strong, can get in. The other road is precipitous, dangerous, and narrow. The only path is beset with venomous serpents and scorpions, and as evening comes on, there are malarial exhalations which are dangerous till past noon

the next day. The road is only practicable between two watches before sunset. Then the water is undrinkable. The road is very difficult.

“Then again there are four streams which are actually poisonous. One is called ‘The Dumb Spring.’ Its water is pleasant to the palate, but it makes people dumb, and they die in a few days. A second fountain is called ‘The Destruction Spring’ and is hot. But if a person bathes therein, his flesh rots till his bones protrude and he dies. The third is ‘The Black Spring.’ Its water is clear. If it be sprinkled on a person’s body, his limbs turn black and presently he dies. The fourth is ‘The Weak Spring,’ ice cold. If a person drink of this water his breath is chilled, he becomes weak as a thread and soon dies.

“Neither birds nor insects are found in this region, and no one but the Han General Ma Yuan, who was styled General Who Quells the Waves for this exploit, has ever passed. Now the northeast road shall be blocked, and you may hide here perfectly safe from those troops of Shu, for, finding that way blocked, they will try the other road, which is waterless save for the four deadly springs. No matter how many they be, they will perish, and we need no weapons.”

“Now indeed I have found a place to live in,” cried Meng Huo, striking his forehead. Then, looking to the north, he said, “Even Zhuge Liang’s wonderful cunning will be of no avail. The four springs alone will defeat him and avenge my army.”

The two brothers settled down comfortably as guests of King Duosi, with whom they spent the days in feasting.

In the meantime, as the Mans did not appear, Zhuge Liang gave orders to leave the West Er River and push south. It was then the sixth month, and blazing hot.



A poet sang about the bitter heat of the south:

The hills are sere, the valleys dry,
A raging heat fills all the sky,
Throughout the whole wide universe
No spot exists where heat is worse.

Another poem runs:

The glowing sun darts out fierce rays,
No cloud gives shelter from the blaze.
In parching heat there pants a crane,
The whale swims through the hissing main.
The brook's cool margin now I love,
Or idle stroll through bamboo grove.
I would not march to deserts far
In leathern jerkin donned for war.



Just at the moment of setting out southward, the spies brought news of Meng Huo's retreat: "Meng Huo has fled into the Bald Dragon Valley, and there he has barricaded the entrance. The valley is garrisoned; the hills are precipitous and even impassable."

So Zhuge Liang called in Lu Kai and questioned him, but he did not know exactly the conditions.

Then out spoke Jiang Wan, saying, “Meng Huo’s repeated captures have broken his spirit so that he dare not take the field again. Our soldiers are exhausted with this intense heat, and little is to be gained by prolonging the campaign. The best move would be to return to our own country.”

“If we do this, we shall fall victim to Meng Huo’s scheme,” said Zhuge Liang. “If we retreated, he would certainly follow. Beside, having advanced so far, it would be fruitless to turn back now.”

Wang Ping was sent on with the advance guard and some of the Mans as guides to seek an entrance on the northwest. They found the road and came to the first spring—the Dumb Spring—of which the thirsty men and horses drank freely.

Wang Ping returned to report his success, but by the time he reached camp, he and all his soldiers were speechless. They could only point to their mouths.

Zhuce Liang knew they had been poisoned, and was alarmed. He went forward in his light chariot to find out the cause. He came to the spring. The water was very deep and dark green. A mass of vapor hung about the surface rising and falling. They would not touch the water. Zhuge Liang went up the hills to look around but could see nothing except a rampart of mountains. A deep silence hung over all, unbroken even by the cry of a bird. He was perplexed.

Presently, he noticed an old temple away up among the crags. By the aid of the lianas and creepers, he managed to clamber up, and in a chamber hewn out of the rock he saw the figure of an officer. Beside it was a tablet saying the temple was dedicated to Ma Yuan, the famous general who had

preceded him in that country. The natives had erected it to sacrifice to the leader who had headed the campaign against the Mans.

Zhuge Liang, much impressed, bowed before the image of the great leader, and said, "Your humble servant received a sacred trust, the protection of the son of the First Ruler. That son, the present Emperor, sent him here to subdue the Mans that the land might be free from peril when he decided to attack Wei and take possession of Wu and thereby restore the glory of Han. But the soldiers are ignorant of the country, and some of them have drunk of a poisonous spring so that they have become dumb. Your servant earnestly prays your honored spirit, out of regard for the kindness and justice of the present Emperor, to reveal your spiritual character and manifest your holiness by safeguarding and assisting the army."

Having prayed thus, Zhuge Liang left the temple. While seeking some native whom he might question, he saw in the distance, on a hill opposite, an aged man leaning on a staff. He approached, and as he drew nearer, Zhuge Liang noted his extraordinary appearance. When he had reached the temple, Zhuge Liang asked the venerable visitor to walk in. After the salutations, the old man sat on the stones, and Zhuge Liang opened the conversation with the usual questions.

The old gentleman replied, "Sir Minister, I know you well by repute, and am happy to meet you. Many of the Mans owe their lives to you, and all have been deeply impressed by your kindness."

Then Zhuge Liang returned to the matter nearest his heart, the mystery of the spring.

The old man told him, "That is the Dumb Spring that your soldiers have drunk, and they will die in a few days. Besides that, there are three other poisonous streams called Destruction Spring, Black Spring, and Weak

Spring. All miasma gathers there in the four streams, and it only vaporizes during the two watches before sunset.”

“In short, the Mans cannot be conquered,” said Zhuge Liang when the old man had finished. “And Wu cannot be repressed, nor Wei overcome. And the Hans cannot be restored. So, I fail in the task set me by my Prince; I wish that I might die.”

“Be not so cast down, O Minister,” said the aged one. “I can lead you to a place where you may counteract all this.”

“I would ask for your instruction, Venerable One,” said Zhuge Liang. “What exalted advice have you to confer upon me? I hope you will instruct me.”

“West of here, not far off, is a ravine, and seven miles from its entrance is a stream called the ‘Spring of Eternal Peace,’ near which there lives a recluse known as the Hermit of the Stream. He has not left the ravine these twenty years. Behind his hut, there gushes out a spring of water, called the ‘Spring of Peace and Joy.’ This is the antidote to your poison. Bathing in its waters is a cure for skin diseases and for malaria. Moreover, near the hut grows an herb called the ‘garlic-leaved fragrance.’ Chewing a leaf of this safeguards one from malaria. You can do no better than go to the hut of the recluse forthwith and get these remedies.”

Zhuge Liang humbly thanked his aged counselor, and said, “Venerable Sir, I am profoundly affected by your merciful kindness and compassion. May I ask again by what name may call you?”

The old man rose and entered the temple, saying, “I am the Spirit of this mountain, sent by Ma Yuan to guide you.”

As he said this, he shouted at the solid rock behind the temple, and it opened by itself and let him in.

Zhuge Liang's astonishment was beyond words. He made another obeisance to the Spirit of the temple and went down by the way he had come. Then he returned to his camp.

Next day, bearing incense and gifts, Wang Ping and his stricken men went west to the spot which the old man had indicated. They luckily found the ravine and followed its narrow road till they came to a small, farm-like enclosure, where tall pines and lofty cypresses, luxuriant bamboo, and gorgeous flowers sheltered a few simple huts. An exquisite perfume pervaded the whole place.

Zhuge Liang rejoiced to recognize the spot and at once knocked at the door.

A lad answered his knock, and Zhuge Liang was telling his name when the host came out quickly, saying, "Surely my visitor is the Prime Minister of the Han Dynasty?"

Zhuge Liang saw at the door a man with a bamboo comb holding back his hair, grass shoes on his feet, and a robe of white girded in by a black girdle. He had green eyes and yellowed hair.

"Great Scholar, how did you know who I was?" said Zhuge Liang.

"How could I not have heard of your expedition to the south?"

He invited Zhuge Liang to enter.

When they had seated themselves in their relative positions as host and guest, Zhuge Liang said, "My former Prince, the First Ruler, confided to me the care of his son and successor. That son, now Emperor, gave me a command to lead an army to this country, get the Mans on our side, and spread our culture among them. But now to my disappointment Meng Huo, the King, has hidden himself in the Bald Dragon Valley, and some of my soldiers, on the way to seek him, drank of a certain fountain and are dumb.

But last evening, the former leader of an expedition, Ma Yuan, manifested his sacred presence and told me that you, Exalted Sir, had a remedy for this evil, and I pray you of your pity to give me of the potent fluid whereby my soldiers' lives may be saved."

The recluse replied, "I am only a worthless old man of the wild woods and unworthy of the visit of such as you, O Minister. The water you desire flows out at the back of my cottage, and you may take what you will of it."

The serving lad then showed Wang Ping and his dumb companions to the Spring of Peace and Joy, and he dipped up the waters for them to drink. As soon as they had drunk, they coughed up some poisoned mucus and could speak. The lad also led the soldiers to the Spring of Eternal Peace where they could bathe.

In the cottage, the recluse regaled Zhuge Liang with tea made of cypress seeds and a conserve of pine flowers.

He also told his guest, saying, "In this region, the lands are full of serpents and scorpions, and the lily flowers blown into the springs by the wind make them unfit to drink. However, if you dig wells, you will find good water."

Then Zhuge Liang begged for some of the garlic-leaved herb as an antidote against malaria. The recluse said the soldiers could pluck as much as they wanted. And so everyone put a leaf in his mouth and thus became malaria-proof.

Zhuce Liang, with a low bow, then begged to be told the name of his benefactor.

"I am Meng Huo's eldest brother," said the recluse, smiling. "My name is Meng Jie."

Zhuce Liang started.

“Do not be afraid,” said the recluse. “Let me explain. We were three brothers of the same parents, the eldest being myself. Our parents are both dead. My brother Meng Huo, being headstrong and vicious, has never been amenable to culture. I have talked to him many times, but he kept his own course. Finally, under an assumed name, I retired to this spot. I am ashamed for my brother’s rebellion, which has put you, O Minister, to the trouble of making this expedition into a barren country, but it has given me the privilege of seeing you. For my responsibility in this, I deserve to die a thousand times, as I own to your face, and I beg your pardon.”

Zhuge Liang sighed, saying, “Now I believe that story of the two brothers—Robber Liu Zhi and Noble Liu Xiahui. This is the same thing over again. People renowned for villainy and virtue may come from the same stock.” Then he said to his host, “Would you wish me to represent your merits to the Emperor and get you created a king?”

“How can you think I desire honors or wealth when I am here because of my contempt for all such things?”

Zhuge Liang then wished to make him certain presents, but the recluse would have none of them. So taking leave of his host, Zhuge Liang went back to his camp.



In the southern expedition when the Mans were
subdued,

Zhuge Liang found a high-born recluse in a shady
solitude.

Up till then, the gloomy forests were thought destitute
of men,

That no curling smoke wreath ever floated upwards
from the glen.

As soon as Zhuge Liang reached camp, he set the soldiers digging for water. They dug to a great depth but found none, nor were they more successful when they tried other places. They were very discouraged.

Then Zhuge Liang, in the depths of the night, burned incense and prayed to Heaven: “Unworthy as is thy servant Zhuge Liang, he has received favor from the Great Han and now has been ordered to subdue the Mans. Alas! now our water is spent and my soldiers and animals are parched with thirst. If thy will be to preserve the line of Hans, then give, I beseech thee, sweet water, but if their course is run, then may thy servant and those with him die in this place.”

The morning after this prayer, the wells were full of sweet water.



The Mans must be conquered; Zhuge Liang led a great
array,

Though his skill was superhuman, yet he held the
righteous way;

As the wells gave forth sweet water when Geng
Gong's head bowed full low,

So the reverent prayers of Zhuge Liang made the
lower springs to flow.



The soldiers' spirits revived with the supply of water, and the army soon advanced by hill paths to Bald Dragon Ravine, where they camped. When Meng Huo heard the news, he was greatly taken aback.

"These troops do not appear to have suffered either thirst or fever," said he. "Our springs have lost their power."

King Duosi heard it, but doubted. He and Meng Huo ascended onto a high hill whence they could see their enemies. They saw no signs of illness or distress. All went on calmly and quietly in the camps, water-carrying and cooking, eating and attending to the cattle. Duosi's hair stood on end as he looked at them.

"These are not human soldiers," said he, shivering. "They must be sent from Heaven."

"Our two brothers will fight one fierce battle with these troops of Shu and die therein," said Meng Huo. "We cannot wait calmly to be put into bonds."

"But, O King, if your army should be beaten, my whole family will also perish. Let us encourage the people of the valleys. Let us kill bullocks and slaughter horses to feed them, and urge them to go through fire and water to rush right up to the camp of the enemy and seize upon victory."

So there was great feasting before the Mans took the field.

Just as this was going on, there arrived one Yang Fang, King of twenty-one ravines in the west, and he led thirty thousand troops.

Meng Huo rejoiced exceedingly, saying, "This addition to our forces shall surely bring us victory."

So he and Duosi went out of their own ravine to welcome Yang Fang.

Yang Fang said, "I have with me thirty thousand troops in iron mail, brave and intrepid warriors, who can fly over mountains and bound across

the peaks. They of themselves are a match for the enemy even if the enemy numbered a hundred legions. And, moreover, my five sons, all trained in arms, are with me, all to help you, O Kings.”

The five sons were brought in and presented. They were handsome young fellows, bold- and martial-looking. Father and sons were entertained at a banquet. Halfway through the feast, Yang Fang proposed a diversion.

“There is but scanty amusement in the field,” said Yang Fang, “and so I have brought along some native singing girls who have been taught fencing and such things. If you care for it, they might give an exhibition.”

The feasters hailed the suggestion with joy, and soon thirty maidens came to the front of the tent. Their hair hung about their shoulders, and they were barefooted. They danced and skipped and went through their performance outside. The guests inside clapped their hands and applauded their skill, and the soldiers joined in the choruses.

Presently, at a signal from their father, two of Yang Fang’s sons bore two goblets to Meng Huo and Meng You. Meng Huo and Meng You took the cups and were raising them to their lips when Yang Fang shouted a single word of command, and, instantly, the cupbearers had the two brothers out of their seats and helpless in their hands. At this, Duosi jumped up to run away, but Yang Fang caught him, and he was a prisoner too. The Man maidens ranged themselves in a line along the front of the tent so that none dared approach.

“When the hare dies, the fox mourns,” said Meng Huo. “One sympathizes with one’s own as a rule. We are both chiefs and have been friends. I know not why you should injure me.”

“I had to repay Zhuge Liang the Minister for his compassion on me and my people, and there was no way till you rebelled. Why should I not offer up a rebel in propitiation?”

Leaving Meng Huo, Meng You, and Duosi in the hands of Yang Fang, the Man warriors dispersed, each man returning to his own ravine.

Yang Fang then took the prisoners to the camp of Shu, where he bowed at the tent door, saying, "I and my sons and the sons of my brother are grateful to you for much kindness, wherefore we bring to you as an offering the persons of these rebels."

Zhuge Liang rewarded Yang Fang and bade them bring forward Meng Huo.

"This time are you prepared to yield?" said the Prime Minister.

"It is not your ability, but the treachery of my own people that has brought me to this. If you wish to slay, slay. But I will not yield."

"You know you were the cause of my army entering into a waterless land, where there were those four evil streams, and yet my soldiers were not poisoned and came to no harm. Does it not seem to you like evidence of a superior protecting power? Why will you follow this misguided road and always be obstinate?"

Meng Huo replied, "My fathers have long held the Silver Pit Ravine, and the three rivers and the two forests are their ramparts. If you can take that stronghold, then will I and my heirs forever acknowledge your power and yield."

"I am going to liberate you once more," said Zhuge Liang, "and you may put your army in order if you will and fight a decisive battle. But after that, if you are my prisoner and are still refractory and unsubmitive, I shall have to exterminate your whole family."

Zhuge Liang ordered the lictors to loose the prisoner's bonds and let him go. After he had gone, the other two, Meng You and Duosi, were led in and they also received their freedom. They were given wine and food. but

they were confused and could not look Zhuge Liang in the face. They were given horses to travel on.

The way has been long, and now danger is near,
But faith in their leader banishes fear.

The next chapter will tell how Meng Huo reorganized his army and whose the victory was.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXI

CHAPTER 90

CHASING OFF WILD BEASTS, THE PRIME MINISTER DEFEATS THE MANS
FOR THE SIXTH TIME; BURNING RATTAN ARMORS, ZHUGE LIANG
CAPTURES MENG HUO THE SEVENTH TIME.

All the prisoners were released. Yang Fang and his sons were rewarded with ranks, and his people were given presents. They expressed their gratitude and returned to their own, while Meng Huo and his brother hastened home to Silver Pit Ravine.

Outside this ravine were three rivers—River Lu, River Gannan, and River Xicheng. These three streams united to form the Three Rivers. Close to the ravine on the north was a wide and fruitful plain; on the west were salt wells. The River Lu flowed about seventy miles to the southwest, and due south was a valley called the Liangdu Ravine. There were hills in, as well as surrounding, the ravine, and in these they found silver—whence the name “Silver Pit.”

A palace complex had been built in the ravine, which the Man kings had made their stronghold, and there was an ancestral temple, which they called “Family Spirits,” where they solemnized sacrifices of bulls and horses at the four seasons. They called these sacrifices “Inquiry of the Spirits.” Human sacrifices were offered also, humans of Shu or of their own people belonging to other villages. The sick swallowed no drugs but prayed to a chief sorcerer, called “Medicine Demon.” There was no legal code, the only punishment for every transgression being death.

When girls were grown and became women, they bathed in a stream. Men and women were kept separate, and they married whom they willed, the parents having no control in that particular. There was no formal vocational training. In good seasons, the country produced grain, but if the harvest failed, they would make soup out of serpents and eat boiled elephant flesh.

All over the country, the head of the family of greatest local consideration was termed “King of the Ravine,” and the next in importance was called a “Notable.” A market was held in the city of Three Rivers, on the first day of every moon, and another on the fifteenth. Goods were brought in and bartered.

In his own ravine, Meng Huo gathered his family and clan to the number of a thousand or more and addressed them: “I have been put to shame by the leaders of Shu many times, and I have sworn to take revenge for the insults. Has anyone any proposal to make?”

Thereupon, a certain one replied, saying, “I can produce a man able to defeat Zhuge Liang.”

The assembly turned to the speaker, who was a brother of Meng Huo’s wife. He was the head of eight tribes of the Southern Mans, and was named Chief Dailai.

“Who is the man?” asked Meng Huo.

Chief Dailai replied, “He is Mulu, King of the Bana Ravine. He is a master of witchcraft who can call up the wind and invoke the rain. He rides upon an elephant and is attended by tigers, leopards, wolves, venomous snakes, and scorpions. Beside, he has under his hand thirty thousand superhuman soldiers. He is very bold. O King, write him a letter and send him presents, which I will deliver. If he will consent to lend his aid, what fear have we of Shu?”

Meng Huo was pleased with the scheme and ordered Dailai to draft a letter. Then he ordered Duosi to defend Three Rivers and make the first line of defense.

Zhuge Liang led his troops near the city of Three Rivers. Taking a survey of the country, he noted that the city was surrounded by the three rivers and could only be reached by a bank on one face, so he sent Wei Yan and Zhao Yun to march along the road and attack. But when they reached the rampart, they found it well-defended by bows and crossbows.

The defenders of the city were adepts in the use of the crossbow, and they had one sort which discharged ten arrows at once. Furthermore, the arrows were poisoned, and a wound meant certain death. The two generals saw that they could not succeed, and so retired.

When Zhuge Liang heard of the poisoned arrows, he mounted his light chariot and went to see for himself. Having regarded the defenses, he returned to his camp and ordered a retirement of three miles. This move delighted the Mans, who congratulated each other on their success in driving off the besiegers, whom, as they concluded, had been frightened away. So they gave themselves up to rejoicing and kept no watch. Nor did they even send out scouts.

The army of Shu made a strong camp in their new halting place and closed the gates for defense. For five days, they gave no sign. One evening, just at sunset, a slight breeze began to blow.

Then Zhuge Liang issued an order: "Every man should provide himself with a coat by the first watch. If anyone lacks one, he will be put to death."

None of the generals knew what was in the wind, but the order was obeyed. Next, each man was ordered to fill his coat with earth. This order appeared equally strange, but it was carried out.

When all were ready, they were told: "You are to carry the earth to the foot of the city wall, and the first arrivals will be rewarded."

So they ran with all speed with the dry earth and reached the wall. Then, with the earth they were ordered to make a raised path, and the first soldier on the wall was promised a reward.

The whole of the one hundred thousand troops of Shu, and their native allies, having thrown their burdens of earth near the wall, then quickly rushed up the incline, and with one great shout were on the wall. The archers on the wall were seized and dragged down. Those who got clear ran away into the city. King Duosi was slain in the melee that followed on this attack. The soldiers of Shu moved through the city slaying all they met. Thus was the city captured and, with it, great booty of jewels, which were made over to the army as a reward for their prowess.

The few soldiers who escaped went away and told Meng Huo: "The city of Three Rivers has been lost, and King Duosi slain!"

Meng Huo was much distressed. Before he had recovered, they told him: "The army of Shu has come over and is encamped at the mouth of Silver Pit Ravine."

Just as he was in the very depths of distress, a laugh came from behind the screen.

A woman appeared, saying, "Though you are brave, how silly you are! I may be a woman, but I want to go out and fight."

The woman was his wife, Lady Zhurong. She was a descendant of the Zhurong family of the Southern Mans. She was expert in the use of the

flying sword and never missed her aim.

Meng Huo rose and bowed to her. Lady Zhurong thereupon mounted a horse and forthwith marched out at the head of a hundred generals, leading fifty thousand troops of the ravines, and set out to drive off the troops of Shu.

Just as the host got clear of the Silver Pit Palace, it was stopped by a cohort led by Zhang Ni. At once, the Mans deployed, and the lady leader armed herself with five swords such as she used. In one hand she held an eighteen-foot signal staff, and she sat atop a curly-haired, reddish horse.

Zhang Ni was secretly troubled at the sight before him, but he engaged the lady commander. After a few passes, the lady turned her steed and bolted. Zhang Ni went after her, but a sword came flying through the air directly at him. He tried to defend with one hand, but it wounded his arm, and he fell to the ground. The Mans gave a loud shout; some of them pounced on the unlucky leader and made him prisoner.

Then Ma Zhong, hearing his comrade had been taken, rushed out to rescue, but only to be surrounded. He saw the lady commander holding up her staff and made a dash forward, but just then the Mans threw hooks and pulled down his steed, and he was also a prisoner.

Both generals were taken into the ravine and led before the King. He gave a banquet in honor of his wife's success, and during the feast, the lady bade the lictors put the two prisoners to death. They hustled the two generals in and were just going to carry out their orders when Meng Huo checked them.

"No! Five times has Zhuge Liang set me at liberty. It would be unjust to put these to death. Confine them till we have taken their chief, then we may execute them."

His wife was merry with wine and did not object. So their lives were spared.

The defeated soldiers returned to their camp. Zhuge Liang took steps to make up for the mishap by sending for Ma Dai, Zhao Yun, and Wei Yan, to each of whom he gave special and private orders.

Next day, the Man soldiers reported to the King that Zhao Yun was offering a challenge. Lady Zhurong forthwith mounted and rode out to battle. She engaged Zhao Yun, who soon fled. The lady was too prudent to risk pursuit and rode home. Then, Wei Yan repeated the challenge, and he also fled as if defeated. But again the lady declined to pursue.

Next day, Zhao Yun repeated his challenge and ran away as before. Lady Zhurong signaled no pursuit. But at this, Wei Yan rode up and opened a volley of abuse and obloquy. This proved too much, and she gave the signal to go after him and led the way. Wei Yan increased his pace, and the lady commander doubled hers, and she and her followers pressed into a narrow road along a valley. Suddenly, behind her was heard a noise, and Wei Yan, turning his head, saw the lady tumble out of her saddle.

She had rushed into an ambush prepared by Ma Dai; her horse had been tripped up by ropes. She was captured, bound, and carried off to the Shu camp. Some of her people endeavored to rescue her, but they were driven off.

Zhuce Liang seated himself in his tent to see his prisoner, and Lady Zhurong was led up. He bade them remove her bonds, and she was conducted to another tent, where wine was laid before her. Then a message

was sent to Meng Huo to say that she would be exchanged for the two captive leaders.

The King agreed, and Ma Zhong and Zhang Ni were set free. As soon as they arrived, the lady was escorted by Zhuge Liang himself to the mouth of the ravine, where Meng Huo welcomed her both gladly and angrily.

Then they told Meng Huo of the coming of the King of Bana Ravine, and he went out to meet Mulu. Mulu rode up on his white elephant, dressed in silks, and with many gold and pearl ornaments. He wore a double sword at his belt, and he was followed by the motley pack of fighting animals that he fed, gamboling and dancing about him.

Meng Huo made him a low obeisance and then poured out his tale of woes. Mulu promised to avenge his wrongs and was led off to a banquet which had been prepared.

Next day the deliverer went out to battle, with his pack of wild creatures in his train. Zhao Yun and his colleague Wei Yan quickly made their array of footmen and then took their station in front, side by side, and studied their opponents. The Man banners and weapons were all extraordinary. Most of the warriors wore no armor and none wore any clothing. Their faces were sunburned. They carried four sharp, pointed knives in their belts. Signals were not given by drum or trumpet, but by a gong.

King Mulu had two swords in his belt and carried a hand bell. He urged his white elephant forward and emerged from between his flags.

“We have spent all our life in the battlefields, but we have never seen the like of this before,” said Zhao Yun.

As they talked to one another, they noticed that the opposing leader was mumbling something that might be a spell or a curse, and from time to

time he rang his bell. Then suddenly, the wind picked up, stones began to roll and sand to fly, and there was a sound as of a heavy shower of rain. Next, a horn rang out, and thereupon the tigers and the leopards, and the wolves and the serpents, and all the other wild beasts came down on the wind, snapping and clawing. How could the soldiers of Shu stand such a thing as that? So they retreated, and the Mans came after them fiercely, chasing and slaying their enemies as far as the city of Three Rivers.

Zhao Yun and Wei Yan mustered their defeated troops and went to their leader to confess their failure. Zhuge Liang, however, was neither angry nor dejected.

“The fault is not yours,” he said. “Long ago, when I was still in my rustic hut, I knew the Mans possessed certain powers over beasts, and I provided against this occurrence before we left Shu. You will find twenty big, sealed carts in the baggage train. We will use half of them now.”

He bade his staff bring forward ten of the red box-carts; the other ten black carts were left untouched. They all wondered what would happen. Then the carts were opened, and they turned out to be carved and colored models of huge wild beasts, with coats of worsted, teeth and claws of steel; each could accommodate ten people. Choosing one hundred beasts, he told off a thousand troops and bade them stuff the mouths of the beasts full of inflammables.

Next day, the army of Shu marched out to the attack and were arrayed at the entrance to the Silver Pit Ravine. The Man soldiers went into the ravine and told their king. Mulu, thinking himself perfectly invincible, did not hesitate, but marched out, taking Meng Huo with him. Zhuge Liang, dressed in the simple robe of a Daoist, went out in his light chariot. In his hand, he held a feather fan. Meng Huo, who recognized his enemy, pointed him out to Mulu.

“That is Zhuge Liang in that small chariot. If we can only capture him, our task is done.”

Then Mulu began to mutter his spells and to ring his bell. As before, the wind picked up and blew with violence, and the wild beasts came on.

But at a wave of the simple feather fan, lo! the wind turned and blew the other way. Then from out of the host of Shu there burst the horrible wild beasts. The real wild beasts of the Mans saw, rushing down upon them, huge creatures, whose mouths vomited flames and whose nostrils breathed out black smoke. They came along with jingling bells, snapping and clawing, and the real beasts turned tail and fled in among the host of their own side, trampling them down as they sped. Zhuge Liang gave the signal for a general onset, and his troops rushed forward with beating drums and blaring trumpets. Mulu was killed in the melee. Meng Huo's whole clan fled in panic and tore up among the hills out of the way. And thus, Silver Pit Ravine was taken.

Next day, as Zhuge Liang was telling off parties to search for and capture the King, it was announced that the brother-in-law of Meng Huo, Chief Dailai, having vainly tried to persuade the King to yield, had made prisoners of him and his wife and all his clan and were bringing them to Zhuge Liang.

Hearing this, Zhang Ni and Ma Zhong were called and received certain orders, upon which they hid themselves in the wings of the tent with a large body of sturdy warriors. This done, Zhuge Liang ordered the keepers to open the gates, and in came Chief Dailai, with Meng Huo and his people in custody.

As Dailai bowed at the entrance of the hall, Zhuge Liang called out, "Let my strong captors appear!"

At once out came the hidden men, and every two of them laid hands upon a prisoner and bound him.

"Did you think your paltry ruse would deceive me?" said Zhuge Liang. "Here you are: a second time captured by your own people and brought before me that you might surrender. The first time, I did not hurt you. But now I firmly believe this surrender is part of a plot to kill me."

Then he called out to his guards to search the prisoners. They did so, and on every man, they found a sharp knife.

"Did you not say that if your family were taken as prisoners you would yield? How now?" said Zhuge Liang.

"We have come of our own will and at the risk of our lives. The credit is not yours. Still I refuse to yield," replied Meng Huo.

"This is the sixth time I have captured you, and yet you are obstinate. What do you expect?"

"If you take me a seventh time, then I will turn to you and never rebel again."

"Well, your stronghold is now destroyed. What have I to fear?" said Zhuge Liang.

He ordered the bonds to be loosed, saying, "If you are caught again and lie to me once more, I shall certainly not be inclined to let you off."

Meng Huo and his people put their hands over their heads and ran off like rats.

The defeated Mans who had fled were of thousands, and more than half of them were wounded. They fell in with their King, who restored what

order was possible and felt glad that he had still some leaders left. Then he and the Chief Dailai took counsel together.

“Whither can we go?” said Meng Huo. “Our stronghold is in the hands of the enemy.”

Dailai replied, “There is but one country that can overcome these troops. That is the Wuguo Kingdom. It lies two hundred miles to the southeast. The King of that state is named Wutugu. He is a giant of twelve spans. He does not eat grain, but lives on serpents and venomous beasts. He wears scaly armor, which is impenetrable to swords and arrows. His warriors wear rattan armor. This rattan grows in gullies, climbing over rocks and walls. The inhabitants cut the rattans and steep them in oil for half a year. Then they are dried in the sun. When dry, they are steeped again, and so on many times. Then they are plaited into helmets and armor. Clad in this, the men float across rivers, and it does not get wet. No weapon can penetrate it. The soldiers are called the Rattan Army. You may seek aid from this king, and with his help you can take Zhuge Liang as easily as a sharp knife cleaves bamboo.”

Meng Huo went to the Wuguo Kingdom and saw the King. The people of this country do not live in houses but dwell in caves. Meng Huo told the story of his woes.

And King Wutugu said, “I shall muster all my men to avenge you.”

Meng Huo bowed low and expressed great gratitude.

Wutugu called up two generals named Xi Ni and Tu An and gave them thirty thousand of the rattan-armored soldiers and bade them march northeast.

They came to a river called the River of Peach Flowers, on both banks of which grew many peach trees. Year after year, the leaves of these trees

fell into the river and rendered it poisonous to all but the natives. But to the natives, it was a stimulant which doubled their vigor. They camped on the bank of this river to await the coming of the army of Shu.

Now Zhuge Liang was informed of the journey of Meng Huo and its results, and he knew when the rattan-clad army camped at the ford. He also knew that Meng Huo had collected all the soldiers of his own that he could manage. Zhuge Liang at once marched to the ford. He questioned the natives, and they told him that the peach leaves were falling and the water of the river was undrinkable. So he retired two miles and camped. Only Wei Yan was left to hold the bank of the River of Peach Flowers.

Next day, Wutugu led the Wuguo warriors across the stream, and, with a rolling of drums, Wei Yan went out to meet them. The Wuguo men poured forth. The soldiers of Shu shot at them, but neither arrows nor bolts penetrated their armors; they rolled off harmlessly. Nor could swords cut or spears enter. The enemy, thus protected and armed with big swords and prongs, were too much for the troops of Shu, who had to run away. However, they were not pursued. When, on the retreat, they came to the Peach Flowers Ford, they saw the Mans crossing as if walking on the water. Some of them were tired, so they took off their rattan breastplates, sat upon them and floated to the other side.

When Zhuge Liang heard the report of his general, he summoned Lu Kai and called in some natives.

Lu Kai said, "I have heard of the Wuguo Kingdom as perfectly tribal among the Man nations. I have also heard of the rattan armor, which can withstand all thrusts, and the harmful River of Peach Flowers. The Southern

Mans are so untameable that victory will mean little. We would rather retreat.”

“No, no,” said Zhuge Liang merrily, “we have had too much difficulty in getting here to go back so easily. I shall have a counter-plan for these people tomorrow.”

Having provided for the defense of his camp, he gave strict orders to his generals not to go out to fight, and he went to reconnoiter. He rode in his light chariot with a few natives as guides. He came to the ford, and from a secluded spot in the mountains on the north bank, he looked about him.

The whole country was mountainous and difficult, impassable for any carriage. So he got out and went afoot. Presently, from a hill, he saw a long, winding valley, like a huge serpent. The sides were very precipitous and bare. However, a road ran through the middle.

“What is the name of the valley?” asked Zhuge Liang.

“It is called ‘Coiled Serpent Valley,’” said the guides. “At the other end, you come into the high road to Three Rivers. The road goes by a valley called ‘Talang See.’”

“The very thing,” said Zhuge Liang gladly. “Surely this is providence. I shall score a great success here.”

Having seen enough, he retraced his steps, found his chariot, and returned to camp. At camp, Ma Dai was called and put in charge of the preparations.

Zhuce Liang gave him an order: “I will give you the ten black painted carts, and you are to get a thousand long bamboo poles. Open the carts, and follow my instructions there. Then you are to keep the two ends of the Coiled Serpent Valley. Half a month is the deadline, and all of these must be

performed with the most perfect secrecy under military law and punishment.”

Next, Zhao Yun was sent to a point on the Three Rivers road, Wei Yan to camp at the Peach Flowers Ford.

Zhuge Liang told Wei Yan, “If the Mans come over the river, you are to abandon the camp and march toward a certain white flag you will see. Further, in half a month you will have to acknowledge defeat some fifteen times and abandon seven camps. On no account are you to come report to me even after fourteen defeats.”

Wei Yan went off, more than a little irked at the prospect but prepared to obey. Next, Zhang Yi was sent to make a stockade at a certain indicated point, and Zhang Ni and Ma Zhong were told to lead the Man soldiers who had surrendered; other orders were given.

Meng Huo had begun to experience a real terror of Zhuge Liang, and he warned King Wutugu of Wuguo, saying, “This Zhuge Liang is exceedingly crafty. Ambush is one of his favorite ruses, so you should warn your soldiers that on no account should they enter a valley where the trees are thick.”

“Great King, you speak with reason,” said Wutugu. “I have always heard that the people of the Middle Kingdom are full of wiles, and I will see that your advice is followed. I will go in front to fight, and you may remain in the rear to give orders.”

Presently, the scouts told them of the arrival of the troops of Shu on the bank of the Peach Flowers River. Wutugu sent his two generals, Xi Ni and Tu An, to cross the river and engage them. The two sides met, but Wei Yan

soon suffered a defeat and left the field. The Mans were afraid to pursue, as they dreaded an ambush.

In the meantime, Wei Yan laid out another camp. The Mans crossed the river in greater force. Wei Yan came out to meet them, but again fled after a very short fight. This time, the Mans pursued, but having lost their hold of the enemy after three miles, and coming then to the former camp of the Shu army, which seemed quite safe, they occupied it.

Next day, Xi Ni and Tu An asked King Wutugu to come to the camp, and they reported what had happened. Wutugu decided to make a general advance to drive the troops of Shu before him. They fled, even casting aside their breastplates and throwing away their arms; they were in such haste to flee. And the troops of Shu went toward a white flag that appeared in the distance. They found a camp already made, which they occupied.

Soon, however, Wutugu came near, and as he pressed forward, Wei Yan abandoned this camp and fled. When the Mans reached the camp, they took up quarters therein.

Soon after, they set out to renew the pursuit, but Wei Yan turned back and checked them. This was only a temporary check, for he fled after three encounters, going toward a white flag in the distance.

This sort of thing continued daily until the soldiers of Shu had been defeated and driven out of the field fifteen times and had abandoned their camp on seven different occasions.

The Mans were now hot in pursuit and pressed on with all their might, Wutugu being in the forefront of the pursuers. But then they came to a thick umbrageous wood, and he halted, for he saw flags moving about behind the sheltering trees.

“Just as you foretold,” said Wutugu to Meng Huo. “The men of Shu like using ambush.”

“Yes. Zhuge Liang is going to be worsted this time. We have beaten off his troops now daily for half a month and won fifteen successive victories. His troops run when they simply hear the wind. The fact is he has exhausted all his craft and has tried every ruse. Now our task is nearly done.”

Wutugu was greatly cheered and began to feel contempt for his enemy.

The sixteenth day of the long fight found Wei Yan leading his oft-defeated troops once more against the rattan-protected foe. King Wutugu on his white elephant was well in the forefront. He had on a cap with symbols of the sun and moon and streamers of wolf's beard, a fringed garment studded with gems, which allowed the plates or scales of his cuirass to appear, and his eyes seemed to flash fire. He pointed the finger of scorn at Wei Yan and began to revile him.

Wei Yan whipped up his steed and fled. The Mans pressed after him. Wei Yan made for the Coiled Serpent Valley, for he saw a white flag calling him thither. Wutugu followed in hot haste, and as he saw only bare hills without a sign of vegetation, he felt quite confident that no ambush was laid. So he followed into the valley. There, he saw some score of black-painted carts in the road.

The soldiers said to each other, “The carts must be the commissariat wagons of the enemy, abandoned in their hasty flight when they heard of the coming of Your Majesty.”

This only urged the King to greater speed, and he went on toward the other mouth of the valley, for the soldiers of Shu had disappeared. However, he saw piles of timber being tumbled down across the track and great boulders being rolled down the hillside into the road. The pursuers cleared

away the obstacles. When they had done so and advanced a little, they saw certain wheeled vehicles in the road, some large, some small, laden with wood and straw, which was burning. Wutugu was suddenly frightened and ordered a retreat.

But he heard much shouting in the rear, and they told him: "The exit has been blocked with wood-laden carts, which on being broken open are found to contain explosive, and they are all on fire."

However, seeing that the valley was barren and devoid of grass and wood, Wutugu was not in the least alarmed and merely bade his soldiers search for a way round.

Then he saw torches being hurled down the mountainside. These torches rolled till they came to a certain spot, where they ignited the fuses leading to the powder. Then the ground suddenly heaved with the explosion of bombs beneath. The whole valley was soon full of flames, darting and playing in all directions, and wherever they met with rattan armor, the rattan caught fire, and thus the whole army, huddled and crowded together, burned in the midst of the valley.

Zhuge Liang looked on from the heights above and saw the Mans burned. Many of the dead had been mangled and torn by the explosions of the mines. The air was full of suffocating vapor.

Zhuge Liang's tears fell fast as he saw the slaughter, and he sighed, saying, "I am rendering great service to my country, yet I have sacrificed many lives. My life shall be shortened for this."

Those who were with him were also deeply affected.

King Meng Huo was in his camp awaiting news of success when he saw a crowd of Man soldiers come along, and they bowed before him and told him, “King Wutugu is fighting a great battle and is about to surround Zhuge Liang in the Valley of the Coiled Serpent. But he needs help. We are natives of the local ravines, and we ourselves had no alternative when we yielded to Shu. But now we have returned to your allegiance and are willing to come to help Your Majesty.”

So Meng Huo placed himself at the head of his clansmen and those who had just come to him, and lost no time in marching out. He bade them lead him to the spot. But when he reached the valley and saw the destruction, he knew he had been made a victim again. As he made to retire, there appeared a body of his enemy on each side under Zhang Ni and Ma Zhong, and they began to attack. Meng Huo was making what stand he could when a great shouting arose. The Mans were nearly all disguised soldiers of Shu, and they quickly surrounded him and his clansmen to make them prisoners.

Meng Huo galloped clear and got into the hills. Presently, he fell upon a small chariot, with a few guards about it, and therein sat Zhuge Liang, simply dressed and holding a fan.

“What now, rebel Meng Huo?” cried Zhuge Liang.

But Meng Huo had galloped away. He was soon stopped by Ma Dai and lay a helpless prisoner, bound hand and foot. His wife, Lady Zhurong, and the other members of his family were also taken.

Zhuce Liang returned to camp and seated himself in the high place in his own tent. He was still sad at the thought of the sacrifice of life.

He said to his officers, "There was no help for it; I had to use that plan. But it has sadly injured my inner virtue. Guessing that the enemy would suspect an ambush in every thicket, I sent people to walk about in wooded places with flags. Really there was no ambush. I bade Wei Yan lose battle after battle just to lead the enemy on and harden their hearts. When I saw the Valley of the Coiled Serpent, with its bare sides of smooth rock and the road in its depths, I recognized what could be done and sent Ma Dai to arrange the contents of the black carts—the mines—which I had prepared long ago for this purpose. In every bomb were nine others, and they were buried thirty paces apart. They were connected by fuses laid in hollow bamboos that they might explode in succession, and the force was enormous. Zhao Yun prepared those carts laden with straw and rolled down the piles of timber and boulders that blocked the mouth. Wei Yan led Wutugu on and on till he had enticed the King into the valley, when he took up a position to escape. Then the burning began.

"They say that what is good for water is not much good for fire, and the oil-soaked rattan, excellent as a protection against swords and arrows, was most flammable, catching fire at sight. The Mans were so stubborn that the only way was to use fire, or we should never have scored a victory. But I much regret that the destruction of the people of Wuguo has been so complete. Heaven shall not overlook this wrong."

The officers were deeply moved.

Then Meng Huo was summoned. He appeared and fell upon his knees. His limbs were freed from the bonds, and he was sent into a side tent for refreshment. The chief prisoners were Meng Huo, Lady Zhurong, Meng You, and Dailai. There were many of his clan, as well.

As they were eating and drinking, a messenger appeared in the door of the tent and addressed the King: "The Prime Minister is ashamed and does

not wish to see you again, Sir. He has sent me to release you. You may enlist another army if you can and once more try a decisive battle. Now you may go.”

But instead of going Meng Huo began to weep.

“Seven times a captive and seven times released!” said the King. “Surely there was never anything like it in the whole world. I am not entirely devoid of a sense of propriety and rectitude. Does he think that I feel no shame?”

Thereupon, he and all his followers fell upon their knees and crawled to the tent of the Commander-in-Chief and begged pardon, saying, “O Minister, you are the majesty of Heaven. We people of the south will offer no more opposition.”

“Then you yield?” said Zhuge Liang, sighing.

“I and my children and grandchildren are deeply affected by your all-pervading and life-giving mercy. Now how can we not yield?”

Zhuce Liang asked Meng Huo to come up into the tent and be seated, and he prepared a banquet of felicitation. Also, he confirmed Meng Huo in his kingship and restored all the places that had been captured. Everyone was overwhelmed with Zhuge Liang’s generosity, and they all went away rejoicing.



A poem has praised Zhuge Liang’s action:

He rode in his chariot green,
In his hand just a feather fan,
Seven times he released a king

As part of his conquering plan.
Having chosen a beautiful spot
Where the valleys debauch on the plain,
Lest his kindness should ever be forgot,
The vanquished erected a fane.



High Counselor Fei Yi ventured to remonstrate with Zhuge Liang on his policy.

He said, “You, O Minister, have led the army this long journey into the wilds and have reduced the Man country and have brought about the submission of the king. Why not appoint officials to share in the administration and hold the land?”

Zhugé Liang replied, “There are three difficulties. To leave foreigners implies leaving a guard for them: there is the difficulty of feeding the guard. The Mans have lost many of their relatives. To leave foreigners without the guard will invite a calamity: this is the second difficulty. Among the Mans, dethronements and murders are frequent, and there will be enmities and suspicions. Foreigners and they will be mutually distrustful: this is the third difficulty. If I do not leave our people, I shall not have to send supplies, which makes for peace and freedom from trouble.”

They had to agree that the policy was wise.

The kindness of the conqueror was rewarded with the gratitude of these southern people, and they even erected a shrine in his honor, where they sacrificed at the four seasons. As Zhuge Liang and Meng Huo declared

peace, the joy spread to all ravines and villages. And the people sent gifts of jewels, cinnabar, lacquer, medicines, plowing cattle, and chargers for the use of the army. And they pledged themselves not to rebel.

When the feasting to the soldiers were finished, the army marched homeward to Shu. Wei Yan was in command of the advance guard. He marched to the River Lu. But on his arrival, the clouds gathered and a gale blew over the face of the waters. Because of the force of the gale, the army could not advance. Wei Yan then returned and reported the matter to his chief. Zhuge Liang called in Meng Huo to ask what this might mean.

The Mans beyond the border have yielded now at last,
The water demons raging mad won't let the Shu men
go past.

The next chapter will contain Meng Huo's explanation.



END OF ACT XXI

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XXII:

WAR OF SCHOLARS:

THE FIRST NORTHERN EXPEDITION

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXII

CHAPTER 91

SACRIFICING AT THE RIVER LU, THE PRIME MINISTER MARCHES
HOMEWARD; ATTACKING WEI, THE LORD OF WUXIANG PRESENTS A
MEMORIAL.

Meng Huo, at the head of the Man Chieftains and Notables, attended to honoring the army of Shu on its departure. They reached the River Lu in autumn, the ninth month. But on trying to cross the river, a tremendous storm came and hindered them. Wei Yan having reported his difficulty to Zhuge Liang, Meng Huo was asked if he knew of any reason for such a storm.

Meng Huo replied, "Wild spirits have always troubled those who would cross this river. It is necessary to propitiate them with sacrifices."

"What is the sacrifice?" asked Zhuge Liang.

"In the old days, when malicious spirits brought misfortune, they sacrificed humans to the number of seven sevens and offered their forty-nine heads. They also slew a black ox and a white goat. Sacrifice thus, and the wind will subside and the waters come to rest. The same used to be done to secure a plenteous harvest."

"How can I slay a single person now that fighting is done and peace has returned?" said Zhuge Liang.

Zhuce Liang went down to the river to see for himself. The north wind was blowing hard, and the waves were high. Both soldiers and horses seemed frightened. He himself was perplexed. Then, he sought out some of the natives and questioned them.

They said, “We have heard the demons moaning every night since your army crossed the river. The cries begin at dusk and continue till dawn. There are many dark demons in the malarial vapors, and no one dares cross.”

“The sin is mine,” sighed Zhuge Liang, “for more than a thousand soldiers of Ma Dai perished in these waters beside many southern men. Their poor, distressed souls are not yet freed. Therefore, I will come this night and sacrifice to them.”

“According to the ancient rule the number of victims ought to be forty-nine. Then the spirits will disperse,” said the natives.

“As the resentful demons are here because of the deaths of people, where is the sense in slaying more? But I know what to do.”

Zhuce Liang bade them make balls of flour paste after the manner of human heads and stuff them with the flesh of oxen and goats. These would be used instead of human heads, and they called these *mantou*, or “tribal heads.”

By nightfall, an altar had been set up on the bank of the river with the sacrificial objects all arranged. There were also forty-nine lamps. Flags were flying to summon the souls. The forty-nine *mantou* were piled up on the ground. In the middle of the third watch, at midnight, Zhuge Liang, dressed in Daoist garb, went to offer the sacrifice in person, and he bade Dong Jue read this prayer:

“On the first day of the ninth month of the third year of the era Beginning Prosperity of the Han Dynasty, I, Zhuge Liang, Prime Minister of Han, Lord of Wuxiang, Imperial Protector of Yizhou, reverently order this sacrifice to appease the shades of those soldiers of

Shu who have died in their country's service and those of the southern peoples who have perished.

“I now declare to you, O ye shades, the majesty of my master, the Emperor of the mighty Han Dynasty, excelling that of the Five Feudatories and brilliantly continuing the glory of the Three Dynastic Kings. Recently, when the distant south rebelliously invaded his territory, contumeliously sent an army, loosed the venom of their sorcery, and gave free rein to their savagery in rebellion, I was commanded to punish their crimes. Wherefore, my brave armies marched and utterly destroyed the contemptible rebels. My brave soldiers gathered like the clouds, and the insensate rebels melted away. Hearing of the easy successes I won, they were entirely demoralized.

“My army consists of heroes from the Nine Regions, and officers and men are famous in the empire; all are expert in war and skilled in the use of arms. They go whither light leads them and serve the Emperor. All have exerted themselves to obey orders and carried out the plans for the seven captures of Meng Huo. They were whole-hearted in their service and vied in loyalty. Who could foresee that you, O Spirits, would be sacrificed in the strategy and be involved in the enemies' wicked wiles? Some of you went down to the deep springs wounded by flying arrows. Others went out into the long night hurt by lethal weapons. Living, you were valorous; dead, you left behind a name.

“Now we are returning home. The victors' song is in our mouths, and our prisoners accompany us. Your spirits are with us still and certainly hear our prayers. Follow the banners, come with the host,

return to your country, each to his own village, where you may enjoy the savor of the meat offerings and receive the sacrifices of your own families. Do not become wandering ghosts in unfamiliar hamlets of restless shades in strange cities. I will petition our Emperor that your wives and little ones may enjoy his gracious bounty: every year gifts of food and clothing, every month donations for sustenance. Comfort yourselves with this provision.

“As for you, Spirits of this place, shades of the departed people of the south, here is the usual sacrifice. You are near home. Year-round sacrifice is not lacking. Living, you stood in awe of the celestial majesty; dead, you come within the sphere of refining influence. It is right that you should hold your peace and refrain from uttering unseemly cries. With bowed head, I pray you partake of the sweet savor of this sacrifice.

“Alas, ye dead! To you this offering!”

Zhuge Liang broke into loud lamentations at the end of this prayer and manifested extreme emotion, and the whole army shed tears. Meng Huo and his followers also moaned and wept, and amid the sad clouds and angry mists, they saw the vague forms of many demons floating away on the wind till they disappeared.

The material portion of the sacrifice was then thrown into the river. Next day, the army stood on the south bank with a clear sky over their heads and calm waters at their feet, the clouds gone and the winds hushed, and the crossing was made without misadventure. They continued their way, whips cracking, gongs clanging, spurs jingling, and ever and anon the song of victory rising over all.

Passing through Yongchang, Wang Kang and Lu Kai were left there in command of the four territories—Yizhou, Yongchang, Zangge, and Yuesui. And then Meng Huo was permitted to leave. He was ordered to be diligent in his administration, maintain good control, and soothe and care for the people left to him to govern and to see to it that agriculture was promoted. He took leave with tears rolling down his cheeks.

When the army neared Capital Chengdu, the Latter Ruler came out ten miles in state to welcome his victorious minister. The Emperor stood by the roadside as Zhuge Liang came up, and waited.

Zhuce Liang quickly descended from his chariot, prostrated himself, and said, “Thy servant has offended in causing his master anxiety. But the conquest of the south was long.”

The Emperor took Zhuge Liang kindly by the hand and raised him. Then the chariots of the Son of Heaven and his minister returned to Chengdu side by side. In the capital were great rejoicings with banquets and rewards for the army. Henceforward, distant nations sent tribute to the Imperial Court to the number of two hundred.

As proposed in a memorial, the Emperor provided for the families of the soldiers who had lost their lives in the expedition, and they were made happy. And the whole land enjoyed tranquility.

Meanwhile, in the Middle Land, the Ruler of Wei, Cao Pi, had now ruled seven years, and it was the fourth year of Beginning Prosperity in the Shu-Han calendar. Cao Pi had taken as wife a lady of the Zhen family, formerly the wife of the second son of Yuan Shao. He had discovered Lady Zhen in

the Sack of Yejun and had married her. She bore him a son, Cao Rui, who was very clever and a great favorite with his father.

Later, Cao Pi took as Beloved Consort a daughter of Guo Yong in Guangzong. Lady Guo was a woman of exceeding beauty, whom her father said, “She is the king among women!” And the name “Lady King” stuck to her.

But with Lady Guo’s arrival at court, Lady Zhen fell from her lord’s favor, and the Beloved Consort’s ambition led her to intrigue to replace the Empress. She took Zhang Tao, a minister at the court, into her confidence.

At that time, the Emperor was indisposed, and Zhang Tao alleged, “In the palace of the Empress has been dug up a wooden image with Your Majesty’s date of birth written thereon. It is meant to exercise a maleficent influence.”

Cao Pi, in his anger, forced his Empress to commit suicide, and he set up the Beloved Consort in her place.

But Lady Guo had no issue. Wherefore, she nourished Cao Rui as her own. However, loved as Cao Rui was, he was not then named heir by the Empress.

When he was about fifteen, Cao Rui, who was an expert archer and a daring rider, accompanied his father to the hunt. In a gully, they spotted a doe and its fawn. Cao Pi shot the doe, while the fawn fled. Seeing that the fawn’s course led past his son’s horse, Cao Pi called out to him to shoot it. Instead, the youth bursts into tears.

“Your Majesty has slain the mother. How can one kill the child as well?”

The words struck the Emperor with remorse. He threw aside his bow, saying, “My son, you would make a benevolent and virtuous ruler.”

From this circumstance Cao Pi decided that Cao Rui should succeed, and conferred upon him the principedom of Pingyuan.

In the fifth month, the Emperor fell ill, and medical treatment was of no avail. So the chief officers were summoned to the bedside of the Emperor. They were Commander of the Center Army Cao Zhen, General Who Guards the West Chen Qun, and Grand Commander Sima Yi.

When they had come, the Emperor's son was called, and the dying Emperor spoke thus: "I am grievously ill, and my end is near. I confide to your care and guidance this son of mine. You must support him out of good feeling for me."

"Why does Your Majesty talk thus?" said they. "We will do our utmost to serve you for a thousand autumns and a myriad years."

"No. I know that I am about to die," said the Emperor. "The sudden fall of the gates of Xuchang this year was the omen, as I well knew."

Just then the attendants said that General Who Conquers the East Cao Xiu had come to ask after the Emperor's health. They were told to call Cao Xiu into the chamber.

When he had entered, Cao Pi said to him, "You and these three are the pillars and cornerstones of the state. If you would only uphold my son, I can close my eyes in peace."

These were his last words. A flood of tears gushed forth, and Cao Pi sank back on the couch dead. He was forty years of age and had reigned seven years (AD 229).

The four ministers raised the wailing for the dead and forthwith busied themselves with setting up Cao Rui as the Emperor of Great Wei. The late Emperor received the posthumous style of "Emperor Pi." The late Empress, the consort who had suffered death, was styled "Empress Zhen."

Honors were distributed freely in celebration of the new reign. Zhong Yao was made Imperial Guardian; Cao Zhen, Regent Marshal; Cao Xiu, Minister of War; Hua Xin, Grand Commander; Wang Lang, Minister of the Interior; Chen Qun, Minister of Works; Sima Yi, Imperial Commander of the Flying Cavalry; and many others, conspicuous and obscure, were promoted. A general amnesty was declared throughout all the land.

About this time, a vacancy existed in the commandership of Yongzhou and Liangzhou. Sima Yi asked for the post and got it. He left for his new office as soon as he had received the appointment. All military affairs of the west were now under his command.

In due time, the news of all these doings reached Zhuge Liang and perturbed him not a little.

He was anxious, saying, "Cao Pi is dead, and his son Cao Rui has succeeded him. But that is not my concern. Only I am worried about Sima Yi, who is very crafty and skillful in the art of war, and who, in command of all western forces of Yongzhou and Liangzhou, may prove a serious danger to Shu. This Sima Yi ought to be attacked at once."

Counselor Ma Su spoke of this matter. "You, O Prime Minister, have just returned from an arduous and exhausting expedition, and you should take time to recuperate before you undertake such another. However, I have a scheme by which Cao Rui may be brought to work the destruction of Sima Yi. May I lay it before you?"

"What plan have you?" said he.

"The young emperor has no confidence in Sima Yi although Sima Yi is a high minister of state. Now send someone secretly to Luoyang and Yejun

to disseminate reports that Sima Yi is about to rebel. Further, prepare a proclamation in his name and post it up so as to cause Cao Rui to mistrust him and put him to death.”

Zhuge Liang adopted the suggestion.

Whence it came about that many notices suddenly appeared, and one found its way to the city gate of Yejun. The wardens of the gate took it down and sent it to Cao Rui. This is what it said:

“I, Sima Yi, Imperial Commander of the Flying Cavalry, Commander of the Forces of Yongzhou and Liangzhou, confident in the universal principles of right, now inform the empire:

“The Founder of this Dynasty, Emperor Cao, established himself with the design of recurring the empire to the Lord of Linzi, Cao Zhi. Unfortunately, calumny spread abroad, and the Dragon Ruler could not manifest himself for many years. Emperor Cao’s grandson, Cao Rui, does not follow a virtuous course, though sitting in the high place, and has not fulfilled the great intention of his ancestor. Now I, in accordance with the will of Heaven and favoring the desires of the people, have decided upon a day to set my army in motion in order to secure the wish of the people. When that day arrives, I call upon each one to gather to his lord, and I will destroy utterly the family of any who shall disobey. You are hereby informed that you may all know.”

This document frightened the young Emperor, and he turned pale. At once, he called a council of his officials to consider it.

Hua Xin said, “That was the reason for his having requested the commandership of Yongzhou and Liangzhou. Now Emperor Cao, the Founder of Great Wei, frequently said to me that Sima Yi was ambitious

and hungry, and should not be entrusted with military authority lest he harm the state. This is the first beginning of rebellion, and the author should be put to death.”

Wang Lang said, “Sima Yi is a master of strategy and skilled in tactics. Moreover, he is ambitious and will cause mischief if he be allowed to live.”

Wherefore, Cao Rui wrote a command to raise an army, which he would lead to punish the minister.

Suddenly, Cao Zhen stood forth from the rank of military officers and said, “What you advise is impossible. His Late Majesty, Emperor Pi, confided his son to the care of certain officers of state, of whom Sima Yi is one; wherefore it is certain that he felt sure of Sima Yi’s probity. So far, nothing is known certainly. If you hastily send an army to repress him, you may force him into rebellion. This may be but one of the base tricks of Shu or Wu to cause dissension in our midst so that occasion be found to further their own aims. As no one knows, I pray Your Majesty reflect before you do anything.”

“Supposing Sima Yi really contemplates a revolt. What then?” said Cao Rui.

Cao Zhen replied, “If Your Majesty suspects him, then do as did Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor of Han when, under pretense of taking a trip on the Lake Yunmeng, he summoned his vassals...and seized Han Xin, who had been denounced. Go to Anyi; Sima Yi will assuredly come out to meet you, and his actions and demeanor may be watched closely. He can be arrested if needed.”

Cao Rui changed his mind. Leaving Cao Zhen to regulate the affairs of state, the young Emperor went out with the Imperial Guards, to the number of one hundred thousand, and traveled to Anyi.

Ignorant of the reason of the Emperor's coming, and anxious to show off his dignity, Sima Yi went to welcome his ruler in all the pomp of a commander of a great army of one hundred thousand.

As Sima Yi approached, the courtiers told the Emperor, saying, "Sima Yi's defection is certain since such a large army can only mean that he is prepared to resist."

Whereupon Cao Xiu, with a large force, was sent in front to meet him. Sima Yi thought the Imperial Chariot was coming, and he advanced alone and stood humbly by the roadside till Cao Xiu came up.

Cao Xiu advanced and said, "Friend, His Late Majesty entrusted you with the heavy responsibility of caring for his son. Why are you in revolt?"

Sima Yi turned pale, and a cold sweat broke out all over him as he asked the reason for such a charge. Cao Xiu told him what had occurred.

"This is a vile plot on the part of our rivals, Shu and Wu, to cause dissension," said Sima Yi. "It is a design to make the Emperor work evil upon his ministers that, thereby, another may profit. I must see the Son of Heaven and explain."

Ordering his army to retire, Sima Yi went forward alone to the Emperor's chariot.

Sima Yi bowed low and said, weeping, "His Late Majesty gave me charge of his son. Could I betray him? This is a wile of the enemy. I crave permission to lead an army, first to destroy Shu and then to attack Wu, whereby to show my gratitude to the late Emperor and Your Majesty and manifest my own true heart."

However, Cao Rui did not feel quite convinced, and Hua Xin said, "In any case, withdraw his military powers and let him go into retirement."

And thus it was decided. Sima Yi was forced to retire to his native village. Cao Xiu succeeded to his command, and Cao Rui returned to Luoyang.

The news was soon reported to Shu. Zhuge Liang rejoiced when they told him of the success that had attended the ruse.

“Sima Yi and the forces he commanded in Yongzhou and Liangzhou have been the obstacles in my long-wished-for attack on Wei. Now he has fallen, I have no more anxiety.”

At the first great assembly of officers at court, Zhuge Liang stepped forth and presented to the Ruler of Shu a memorial on the expedition he contemplated.

“The First Ruler had accomplished but half his great task at his death. At this moment, the empire is in three parts, and our country is weak; it is a most critical moment for us. Still, ministers are not remiss in the capital, and loyal and devoted soldiers sacrifice their lives abroad, for they still remember the special kindness of the First Ruler and wish to show their gratitude to him by service to Your Majesty. Therefore, it would be indeed fitting that you should extend your holy virtue to glorify his virtuous memory in the stimulation of the will of your purposeful officers. Your Majesty should not lose yourself in the pursuit of mean things, quoting phrases to confound the eternal principles of rectitude, and so preventing remonstrance from honest people.

“One rule applies to the palace of the Emperor and the residence of a courtier; there must be one law rewarding the good and punishing the evil. Evil-doers and law-breakers, as also true and good people, should be dealt with according to their deserts by the officers concerned in order to manifest Your Majesty’s impartial and enlightened administration. Partiality is wrong, as is one law for the court and another for the regions.

“The High Ministers Fei Yi, Guo Youzhi, and Dong Yun are honest men, devotedly anxious to be loyal to the last degree; wherefore His Late Majesty chose them in his testament. My advice is to consult them in all Palace matters, great or small, before taking action. Your Majesty will reap the enormous advantage of having any failings corrected.

“General Xiang Chong is a man of well-balanced temperament, versed in military matters, to whom, after testing him, the late Emperor applied the epithet ‘capable.’ The consensus of opinion is that Xiang Chong should be Grand Commander. My advice is to consult him in all military matters, great or small, whereby your military forces will yield their maximum, each one being employed to the best advantage.

“Attract worthy people; repel mean ones. This policy achieved glory for the Former Hans, while its reversal ruined the Latter Hans. When the late Emperor was with us, he often discussed this with your servant, and he took much to heart the story of Emperors Huan and Ling.

“The Chair of the Secretariat Chen Zhen, Commander Zhang Si, and Minister Jiang Wan are all incorruptible and enlightened people,

honest to the death. I wish that Your Majesty should have them near and hold them in confidence. If this be done, then the glory of the House of Han will be quickly consummated.

“I was originally a private person, a farmer in Nanyang, concerned only with securing personal safety in a troubled age and not seeking conversation with the contending nobles. His Late Majesty, the First Ruler, overlooking the commonness of my origin, condescended to seek me thrice in my humble cot and consult me on the trend of events. His magnanimity affected me deeply, and I consented to do my utmost for him. Then came defeat, and I took office at a moment of darkest outlook and at a most difficult crisis. This is twenty-one years ago. The First Ruler recognized my diligent care, and when dying he confided the great task to me. From that day, I have lived a life of anxiety lest I should fail in my trust and so dim his glory.

“That is why I undertook the expedition to the lands beyond the River Lu. Now the Southern Mans have been quelled, and our army is in good condition. I ought to lead it against the north, where I may meet with a measure of success in the removal of the wicked ones, the restoration of Han, and a return to the old capital. This is my duty out of gratitude to the late Emperor and loyalty to Your Majesty. As to a discussion of the pros and cons and giving a true version of the whole matter, that belongs to Guo Youzhi and Fei Yi and Dong Yun. I desire Your Majesty to confide to me the task of slaying the rebels and restoring the Hans. If I fail, then punish me by telling the spirit of the late Emperor. If you know not what restoration implies, that is the fault of your advisers.

“Your Majesty should take pains to be guided into the right path and examine carefully what is laid before you, carefully remembering the late Emperor’s testament.

“I cannot express what would be my delight if you had the goodness to accept and act on my advice.

“Now I am about to depart on a distant expedition, I write this with tears, and in deep emotions, beyond my words.”

The Emperor read it through and said, “My Father Minister, you have only just returned from a distant and fatiguing expedition against the Southern Mans. You are not yet refreshed, and I fear this march to the north will be almost too much, even for you.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “The heaviest responsibility lies upon me: the well-being of Your Majesty, confided to me by the First Ruler. My efforts may not be relaxed night or day. The south is at rest; at home is no anxiety. What better time could be hoped for to destroy the rebels and recover the Middle Land?”

Forth from the ranks of courtiers stood Minister Qiao Zhou and said, “I have studied the aspect of the stars. The northern quarter is brilliant and strong. The scheme will not speed.” Then turning toward the Prime Minister, he continued, “You, O Prime Minister, understand the mysteries of the skies. Why do you oppose the stars?”

“Because the stars are in infinite change,” replied Zhuge Liang. “One may rely on the stars too much. Moreover, I have already sent the army into Hanzhong, where I shall act as soon as I have studied what is afoot.”

Qiao Zhou pleaded in vain. Zhuge Liang was too strongly set upon his purpose to yield. So Guo Youzhi, Dong Yun, and Fei Yi were ordered to

attend to matters in the Palace; Xiang Chong was to control all military affairs and became Grand Commander; Jiang Wan was made Military Adviser; Chen Zhen became Chair of the Secretariat; Zhang Si, Controller of the Prime Minister's Palace; Du Qiong, Imperial Censor; Du Wei and Yang Hong, Ministers; Meng Guang and Lai Min, Libationers; Yin Mo and Li Zhuan, Academicians; Xi Zheng and Fei Shi, Secretaries General; Qiao Zhou, Chief Secretary; and others to the number of over a hundred, all to manage the administration of Shu in the absence of Zhuge Liang.

Having received his Emperor's command to lead an expedition against the north, Zhuge Liang returned to his palace and summoned the officers of the army to listen to the orders. And they came, and to each was appointed a duty in the great army:

Front Army Commander—Wei Yan

Front Army Marching Generals—Zhang Yi, Wang
Ping

Rear Army Commander—Li Hui

Rear Army Marching General—Lu Yin

Left Army Commander and Chief of the Commissariat
—Ma Dai

Left Army Marching General—Zhang Ni

Right Army Commander—Ma Zhong

Right Army Marching General—Deng Zhi

Center Army Director—Liu Yang

Center Army Marching Generals—Liao Hua, Hu Ji

Center Army Front Generals—Yuan Lin, Liu Ba, Xu
Yun

Center Army Rear General—Hu Ban

Center Army Left Generals—Wu Yi, Ding Xian

Center Army Right Generals—Gao Xiang, Guan
Yong, Liu Min

Center Army Center Generals—Du Qi, Sheng Bo, Fan
Qi

Advisers—Ma Su, Yang Yi, Cuan Xi, Du Yi

Secretaries—Fan Jian, Dong Jue

Left Guard—Guan Xing

Right Guard—Zhang Bao

Inspector—Yan Yan

Li Yan was given the task of guarding the passes against Wu from the southeast.

Zhuge Liang was the Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Expedition.

All being ready, a day was chosen for the start: the fifth year, the third month, on the day of “the tiger.”

After the appointments had all been made, there came forward a veteran who had listened in vain for the duty assigned him.

“Old I may be,” said he, “yet have I still the valor of Lian Po and the heroism of Ma Yuan. Why am I thought useless any more than these two who refused to acknowledge old age?”

It was Zhao Yun.

Zhuge Liang said, “I have lost my friend Ma Chao to illness since I returned from the Southern Expedition, and I feel as I had lost an arm. Now, General, you must own that the years are mounting up. Any slight lapse would not only shake the life-long reputation of yourself but might have a bad effect on the whole army.”

Zhao Yun replied bitterly, "I have never quailed in the presence of the enemy from the day I first joined the First Ruler. I have ever pressed to the front. It is a happy ending for a person of valor to die on the front. Think you that I should resent it? Let me lead the van, I pray."

Zhuge Liang used all his skill to dissuade the veteran, but in vain.

Zhao Yun was set on it, saying, "If you, O Prime Minister, do not let me lead the van, I will smash my head on the floor and die at your feet."

At last Zhuge Liang yielded, saying, "General, you can have the post of Van Leader, but you must choose a colleague to support you."

"I will go to help the Veteran Leader!" cried Deng Zhi, without a moment's hesitation. "I am not worth much, but I will help lead the attack on the enemy."

Accordingly, five thousand veterans were chosen for the advance guard, and with them, to assist Zhao Yun, went Deng Zhi and ten other generals.

After the vanguard had set out, the main body marched by the north gate, the Latter Ruler himself going to see his minister start. The farewell was taken three miles from the gate, in the face of the grand army with its banners and pennons flaunting in the wind, and spears and swords gleaming in the sun.

Then they took the road leading to Hanzhong.

Naturally, this movement was duly reported in Luoyang at a court held by Cao Rui, when a minister said, "A report from the border stations says that Zhuge Liang has marched three hundred thousand troops into Hanzhong. Zhao Yun and Deng Zhi are leading the advance guard."

The report alarmed Cao Rui, and he asked, "Who can lead an army to repel the advance?"

At once out spoke one, saying, "My father died in Hanzhong, and to my bitter resentment his death is unavenged. Now I desire to lead the army against Shu, and I pray that the armies west of the Pass may be given me for this purpose. I shall render a service to the state, as well as taking vengeance for my father. I care not what fate may befall me."

The speaker was Xiahou Yuan's son, Xiahou Mao. He was by nature very impulsive and also very miserly. When young, he had been adopted by Xiahou Dun. When Xiahou Yuan was killed by Huang Zhong, Cao Cao was moved and married Xiahou Mao to one of his daughters, Princess Qinghe, so that he was an Imperial Son-in-Law. As such, he enjoyed great deference at court. But although he held a military commission, he had never been with the army. However, as he requested the command, he was made Commander-in-Chief of the western armies and was ready to march.

But Minister of the Interior Wang Lang spoke against the appointment, saying, "The appointment is wrong. Xiahou Mao, the Son-in-Law, has never seen a battle and is unsuitable for this post, especially when his opponent is the clever and crafty Zhuge Liang, a man thoroughly versed in strategy."

"I suppose you have arranged with Zhuge Liang to be his ally," sneered Xiahou Mao. "Ever since I was a boy, I have studied strategy, and I am well-acquainted with army matters. Why do you despise my youth? Unless I capture this Zhuge Liang, I pledge myself never again to see the Emperor's face."

Wang Lang and his supporters were silenced. Xiahou Mao took leave of the Ruler of Wei and hastened to Changan to get his army in order. He had two hundred thousand troops from the western areas.

He would go to battle, take the signal flags in grip,
But could he play the leader, he a lad with callow lip?

The next chapter will deal with this campaign.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXII

CHAPTER 92

ZHAO YUN SLAYS FIVE GENERALS; ZHUGE LIANG TAKES THREE CITIES.

Zhuge Liang's army marched northward, passing through Mianyang, where stood Ma Chao's tomb. In honor of the dead Tiger General, Zhuge Liang sacrificed there in person, with Ma Chao's cousin, Ma Dai, as chief mourner for the occasion.

After this ceremony, when the Commander-in-Chief was discussing his plans, the spies came in to report: "The Ruler of Wei, Cao Rui, has put in motion all western forces under Xiahou Mao."

Then Wei Yan went in to offer a plan, saying, "Xiahou Mao is a child of a wealthy family, soft and stupid. Give me five thousand troops, and I will go out via Baozhong, follow the line of the Qinling Mountains east to the Ziwu Valley and then turn north. In ten days I can be at Changan. Hearing of my rush, Xiahou Mao will hasten to vacate the city. Then he must flee by way of Royal Gate. I will come in from the east, and you, Sir, can advance by the Xie Valley with the main army. In this way, all west of Changan will be ours in just one move."

Zhuge Liang smiled at the suggestion. "I do not think the plan quite perfect," said he. "You are gambling by thinking there is no northerner worth considering guarding Changan. If anyone suggests sending a force across to block the exit of the mountains, I am afraid we should lose five thousand troops, to say nothing of the check to our elan. The plan will not work."

“If you, O Prime Minister, march by the high road, they will bring against you the whole host Within the Passes and will thus hold you indefinitely. You will never get to the Middle Land.”

“But I shall go along the level road on the right of Longyou. I cannot fail if I keep to the fixed rules of war.”

Wei Yan withdrew, gloomy and dissatisfied.

Then Zhuge Liang sent Zhao Yun orders for the advance guard to move.

Xiahou Mao was at Changan preparing his force. There came to him a general from Xiliang, named Han De, a man of great valor, whose weapon was a mighty battleax called “Mountain Splitter.” He brought with him eighty thousand of the Qiang tribesmen and offered his services. They were gladly accepted, and his army was made the van of the attack.

This Han De had four sons, all very expert in archery and horsemanship. They were named Han Ying, Han Yao, Han Qiong, and Han Qi, and they came to serve under their father. Han De led his sons and the eighty thousand troops by the road to Phoenix Song Mountain, where they were near the army of Shu, and here they drew up the array.

When the battle line was in order, the father, with his four sons, rode to the front and began to revile their enemy, shouting, “Rebels and raiders! How dare you invade our territory?”

Zhao Yun quickly lost his temper, rode forward and challenged. The eldest son, Han Ying, accepted and galloped out, but he was slain in the third bout. Immediately, his brother Han Yao went out, whirling his sword. But now Zhao Yun’s blood was up, and the old dash and vigor came upon

him so that the young man had no chance to win the battle. Then the third son, Han Qiong, took his great halberd and dashed out to his brother's aid. Zhao Yun had now two opponents; nevertheless, he held his own, nor blenched nor failed a stroke. Seeing that his two brothers were nearing defeat, the fourth son, Han Qi, went to join in the fray with his pair of swords that he had named "Sun and Moon." And there was the veteran warrior with three against him, and he still kept them at bay.

Presently a spear thrust got home on Han Qi, who fell. Another general then coming out to take his place, Zhao Yun lowered his spear and fled. Han Qiong then took his bow and shot three arrows at the fugitive, who turned them aside so that they fell harmlessly. Angry at this, Han Qiong again seized his halberd and went in pursuit. But Zhao Yun took his bow and shot an arrow that wounded his pursuer in the face. So Han Qiong fell and died. Han Yao then galloped up and raised his sword to strike, but Zhao Yun slipped past, got within his guard and made Han Yao a prisoner. Zhao Yun quickly galloped into his own array with his captive, dropped him and then, dashing out, recovered his spear, which had fallen when he had seized his man.

Han De was overwhelmed with the loss of all his sons and went behind the battle array. His Qiang tribesmen were too frightened at the prowess of Zhao Yun to be of any use in battle, and no one dared to meet the old warrior. So they retired, while Zhao Yun rode to and fro among them slaying at his will.



I thought of brave old people, of Zhao Yun,
Who, in spite of numbered years three scores and ten,

Was marvelously strong in battle; who one day
Slew four opposing generals, as great as
When at Dangyang he had saved his lord.



Seeing the successful battle that Zhao Yun was waging, Deng Zhi led on his troops to join in the fight. This completed the discomfiture of the Xiliang army, and they ran away. Han De, seeing the danger of being captured, threw off his armor and went on foot. The soldiers of Shu drew off and returned to their camp.

In camp, Deng Zhi felicitated his veteran colleague.

“For a man of seventy years, you are unique and wonderful,” said he. “You are as much the hero as you ever were. It is almost an incomparable feat to have slain four generals in one day.”

“Yet the Prime Minister thought me too old and did not wish to employ me. I had to give him proof.”

The captive Han Yao was sent to the main body with the messenger who bore an account of the victory.

In the meantime, Han De led his defeated army back to his chief, to whom he related his sad story with many tears. Then Xiahou Mao got angry and decided to lead his own army out against Zhao Yun.

When the scouts reported his coming, Zhao Yun took his spear and mounted his steed. He led one thousand troops out to Phoenix Song Mountain, at the foot of which he made his array. Xiahou Mao was wearing a golden casque, riding a white horse, and carrying a huge sword. From his place beneath the great standard, he saw Zhao Yun galloping to and fro. He was going out to give battle, when Han De checked him.

“Is it not mine to avenge my four sons?” said Han De.

Han De seized his Mountain Splitter ax, and rode directly at the warrior, who advanced with fury. The contest was but short, for in the third encounter, Zhao Yun’s spear thrust brought Han De to the earth. Without waiting a moment, he made for Xiahou Mao, who hastily dashed in behind his ranks and so escaped. Then Deng Zhi led on the main body and completed the victory. The forces of Wei retired three miles and made a camp.

This first battle having gone against him, Xiahou Mao called his officers to counsel.

He said, “I have heard of Zhao Yun long ago but have never met face-to-face. Now, though that warrior is old, he still has incredible prowess. The story of Dangyang where he alone fought against a whole host and came out victor is really not fabricated. But what to be done against such a champion?”

Then Cheng Wu, son of Cheng Yu, said, “My opinion is that this Zhao Yun, though brave in the field, is lacking in the council chamber. Really, he is not to be feared greatly. Give battle again soon, but first prepare a two-pronged ambush. You can retreat and so draw him into it. Then go up onto the hilltop and direct the attack from that point of vantage so that he may be hemmed in on all sides and be captured.”

The necessary plans for this were made, and two parties of thirty thousand each, led by Dong Xin and Xue Ze, went into ambush positions right and left. The ambush laid, Xiahou Mao advanced once more to attack,

drums rolling and flags flying. As soon as he appeared, Zhao Yun and Deng Zhi went to meet him.

Deng Zhi said, "The army of Wei were beaten only yesterday. This renewed attempt must mean that they are trying some trick. You should be cautious, General."

"I do not think this youth, with the smell of mother's milk still on his lips, worth talking about. We shall surely capture him today."

Zhao Yun pranced out, and Pan Sui came to meet him from the side of Wei. But Pan Sui made no stand and quickly ran away. Zhao Yun plunged in to try to capture Xiahou Mao. Then there came out to stop him no less than eight generals of Wei, all of whom passed in front of Xiahou Mao. But one by one they, too, fled. Zhao Yun pressed forward at full speed, Deng Zhi coming up behind.

When Zhao Yun had gotten deeply involved, with the battle raging all around him, Deng Zhi decided to retire. This was the signal for the ambush to come out, Dong Xin from the right and Xue Ze from the left. Deng Zhi was so hampered that he could not attempt to rescue his colleague. Zhao Yun was thus entirely surrounded. However, he struggled on, losing men at every dash, till he had but one thousand troops left. He was then at the foot of the hill whence Xiahou Mao was directing operations, and observing his enemy from this point of vantage, Xiahou Mao sent troops to check Zhao Yun whithersoever he went. Zhao Yun decided to charge up the hill, but he was stopped by rolling bulks of timber and tumbling rocks.

The battle had lasted long, and Zhao Yun was fatigued. So he halted to rest a time, intending to renew the struggle when the moon would be up. But just as he had taken off his armor, the moon rose and, with it, his enemies began to attack with fire as well, and the thunder of the drums was accompanied by showers of stones and arrows.

The oncoming host shouted, "Zhao Yun! Why not dismount and be bound?"

However, Zhao Yun did not think of that but got upon his steed to strive once more to extricate himself. And his enemies pressed closer and closer, pouring in flights and flights of arrows. No advance was possible, and the end seemed very near.

"I refused the repose of age," sighed he, "and now my end will come to me here!"

Just then, he heard new shouting from the northeast, and the array of Wei became disordered. To his joy, Zhao Yun saw Zhang Bao coming toward him, the Serpent Halberd in his hand, and a man's head hanging at his bridle.

Soon Zhang Bao reached the veteran general's side and cried, "The Prime Minister feared some misfortune had befallen you, so he sent me to your aid! I have five thousand troops here. We heard that you were surrounded. On the way, I met Xue Ze and slew him."

Zhao Yun's courage revived, and he and the young general went on toward the southwest, driving the soldiers of Wei before them in disorder. Soon, another cohort came in from the side, the leader wielding the Green-Dragon Saber.

This was Guan Xing, and he cried, "The Prime Minister sent me with five thousand troops to your aid. On the way, I encountered Dong Xin and slew him. Here is his head. The Prime Minister is coming up, too!"

"But why not press on to capture Xiahou Mao since you have had such wonderful success?" cried Zhao Yun.

Zhang Bao took the hint and went forward. Guan Xing followed.

“They are as my own children,” said Zhao Yun to those who stood near. “And they press on wherever there is merit to be won. I am an old leader and high in rank, but I am not worth so much as these two youths. Yet will I risk my life once more for the sake of my old lord, the First Ruler.”

So he led the remnant of his troops to try to capture Xiahou Mao.

During that night, the army of Wei was smitten till corpses covered the earth and gore ran in rivers. Xiahou Mao was unskillful, young, and inexperienced in battle. His army was in utter rout, and he could not think but only flee. At the head of a hundred cavalries, he made for Nanan. His army, leaderless, scattered like rats.

Zhang Bao and Guan Xing set out for Nanan. At the news of their coming, Xiahou Mao closed the city gates and urged his soldiers to defend. Zhao Yun soon joined the generals, and they attacked on three sides. Deng Zhi arrived also, and the city was quite surrounded.

After vain efforts for ten days, they heard the news: “The Prime Minister has stationed the rear army in Mianyang, the left army in Yangping Pass, the right army in Shicheng. He himself is leading the center army toward Nanan.”

The four generals went to visit Zhuge Liang and told him of their failure at the city. He got into his light chariot and rode out to view the city, after which he returned and summoned the officers to his tent.

Zhuce Liang said, “The moat is deep; the walls are steep, and wherefore the city is well-defended and difficult to take. My present plan omits this place. If you persist in the attack and the Wei armies march to try for Hanzhong, our army will be in danger.”

“Consider what the capture of Xiahou Mao would mean,” said Deng Zhi. “He is an Imperial Son-in-Law, and worth more than slaying a hundred ordinary leaders. We have begun the siege, and we should not raise it.”

Zhuge Liang said, “I have other plans. East of this lies Tianshui and, north, Anding. Does anyone know the governors of these two places?”

“Ma Zun is the Governor of Tianshui, Cui Liang that of Anding,” replied a scout.

Zhuge Liang then called to him one by one—Wei Yan, Zhang Bao, Guan Xing, and two trusted subordinates—and gave each certain instructions. They left to carry out their orders.

Next, Zhuge Liang ordered the soldiers to pile up beneath the walls heaps of firewood and straw, saying he was going to burn the city. The defenders on the wall derided him.

Cui Liang, the Governor of Anding, was much frightened when he heard that Xiahou Mao was besieged and began to see to his own defenses. He mustered his four thousand soldiers, resolved to defend his city as long as possible. Then there came a man from the south direction, who said he had secret letters.

Cui Liang had him brought into the city, and, when questioned, the man said, “I am one of Xiahou Mao’s trusted soldiers and named Pei Xu. I was sent to beg for help from Tianshui and Anding. The city of Nan’an is hard-pressed. Every day, we have raised fires to call the attention of your cities to our plight, but our signals have all failed. No one has come. I was ordered to fight my way through the besiegers and come to tell you. You are

to give assistance immediately, and our General will open the gates to help you.”

“Have you a letter from the General?” asked Cui Liang.

A letter was produced from inside the man’s dress, all moist with perspiration. After the Governor had read it, the soldier took it back and went on to the direction of Tianshui.

Two days later, a mounted messenger came to Anding and said to Cui Liang: “Governor Ma Zun of Tianshui with his troops has already started for Nanan. The troops of Anding should march at once to their aid.”

Cui Liang took the advice of his officers. Most of them said, “If you do not go, and Nanan is taken, we shall be blamed for giving up the Imperial Son-in-Law. He must be rescued.”

Thereupon, Cui Liang marched. The civil officers were left in charge of the city. The army took the high road to Nanan. They saw flames shooting up to the sky all the time, and the Governor urged the army to march faster. When fifteen miles from the city, there was heard the drums of an attacking force, and the scouts came to say that the road ahead was held by Guan Xing, while Zhang Bao was coming up quickly in their rear.

At this news, the soldiers scattered in all directions. Cui Liang had a hundred men left with whom he tried to cut his way out that he might return to his own city. He got through.

But when he came to his own city, a flight of arrows greeted him from the wall, and Wei Yan shouted to him, saying, “I have taken the city. You had better yield!”

This was what had happened: Wei Yan and his soldiers, disguised as Anding soldiers, in the darkness of the night had beguiled the wardens of the gate into opening it, and the men of Shu had got in.

Cui Liang set off for Tianshui. But one march away, a cohort came out, and beneath the great flag he saw a light chariot. In the chariot sat a man in Daoist robe with a feather fan in his hand. Cui Liang at once recognized Zhuge Liang, but as he turned, up came Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, who summoned him to surrender. As he was entirely surrounded, no other course was open to him, so he gave in. He went to the great camp with Zhuge Liang, who treated him with courtesy.

After a time, Zhuge Liang said, "Is the Governor of Nanan a friend of yours?"

"He is one Yang Ling, a cousin of Yang Fu. Being neighboring counties, we are very good friends."

"I wish to trouble you to persuade him to capture Xiahou Mao. Can you?"

"If you, O Prime Minister, order me to do this, I would ask you to withdraw your troops and let me go into the city to speak with him."

Zhuce Liang consented and ordered the besiegers to draw off seven miles and camp. Cui Liang himself went to the city and hailed the gate. He entered and went forthwith to his friend's residence. As soon as he had finished the salutations, he related what had happened.

"After the kindness we have received from Wei, we cannot be traitors," said Yang Ling. "But we will meet ruse with ruse."

He led Cui Liang to the Commander-in-Chief and told the whole story.

"What ruse do you propose?" asked Xiahou Mao.

"Let us pretend to offer the city, and let the army of Shu in. Once they are in, we can massacre them."

Xiahou Mao agreed to plot the scheme.

Cui Liang went back to Zhuge Liang's camp, where he said, "Yang Ling wants to offer the Prime Minister the city. He also wants to capture Xiahou Mao, but he is so afraid of having few soldiers that he has made no hasty move."

"That is simple enough," replied Zhuge Liang. "Your hundred troops are here. We can mix with them some of my generals dressed as your officers and so let them get into the city. They can hide in Xiahou Mao's dwelling and arrange with Yang Ling to open the gates in the night. And my grand army will come in to make the capture for you."

Cui Liang thought within himself, *If I do not take the Shu generals, they will arouse suspicion. I would rather take them and kill them as soon as they get within the walls. Then, I will give the signal and beguile Zhuge Liang to enter, and so dispose of him.*

So Cui Liang consented to Zhuge Liang's proposal.

Zhuce Liang gave him instructions, saying, "I will send my trusty Guan Xing and Zhang Bao with you. You will pass them off as the rescuers, just to set Xiahou Mao's mind at rest. But when you raise a fire, I shall take that as my signal and come in."

At dusk the two trusty generals, having received their secret orders, put on their armor, mounted, took their weapons, and got in among the Anding troops. Cui Liang led the small force to the gate. Yang Ling was on the wall. The drawbridge was hoisted. He leaned over the guard rail and scanned those below.

"Who are you?" asked he.

"We are rescuers from Anding."

Now Cui Liang shot an arrow over the wall, to which a secret letter was bound, saying:

“Zhuge Liang is sending two generals into the city that they may help him to get in, but do nothing till we get inside, lest the ruse gets known and the game be spoiled.”

Yang Ling went to show this letter to Xiahou Mao, who said, “Then Zhuge Liang is going to be our victim. Put a company of ax- and billmen in the palace, and as soon as these two generals get inside, shut the gates and fall on. Then give the signal. As soon as Zhuge Liang gets inside the gate, seize him.”

All arrangements being made, Yang Ling went back to the wall and said, “Since you are Anding troops, you may be allowed in.”

The gate was thrown open, and, while Guan Xing followed close after Cui Liang, Zhang Bao was a little way behind. Yang Ling came down to the gate to welcome them. As soon as Guan Xing got near, he lifted his sword and smote Yang Ling, who fell headless. Cui Liang was startled and lashed his steed to flee.

But Zhang Bao rushed forth and cried, “Scoundrel! Did you think your vile plot would be hidden from the eyes of our Prime Minister?”

With that, Cui Liang fell from a spear thrust of Zhang Bao. Then Guan Xing went up on the wall and lit the fire. Soon, the army of Shu filled the city. Xiahou Mao could make no defense, so he tried to fight his way through the south gate. There, he met Wang Ping and was captured. Those with him were slain.

Zhugge Liang entered the city of Nanan and at once forbade all plunder. The various generals reported the deeds of valor. The captive Commander-in-Chief was placed in a prisoner’s cart.

Then Deng Zhi asked, “O Prime Minister, how did you know the treachery of Cui Liang?”

Zhuge Liang said, "I knew the man was unwilling in his heart to yield, so I sent him into the city that he might have a chance to weave a counter-plot with Xiahou Mao. I saw by his manner he was treacherous, and so I sent my two trusty generals with him to give him a feeling of security. Had he been true to me, he would have opposed this. But he accepted it gaily and went with them lest I should suspect him. He thought they could slay the two leaders and entice me in. But Guan Xing and Zhang Bao already had orders of what to do. Everything turned out as I thought, and as they did not expect."

The officers bowed their appreciation of his wonderful insight.

Then Zhuge Liang said, "I sent one of my trusty people to pretend he was a certain Pei Xu of Wei and so deceive this Cui Liang. Then I sent another messenger to reinforce the ruse. I also sent them to Tianshui to repeat the plan, but nothing has happened yet. I do not know the reason. We will take this opportunity to capture that place."

It was decided to take Tianshui next, and thither they moved. Wu Yi and Liu Yang were to guard Nan'an and Anding. Wei Yan was ordered to move toward Tianshui.

When Ma Zun, Governor of Tianshui, heard of Xiahou Mao's being besieged in Nan'an, he called a council at which one party—headed by Yin Shang and Liang Xu—was strongly of the opinion that a rescue should be attempted.

"If anything sinister happens to the Imperial Son-in-Law, 'golden branch and jade leaf' as he is, we shall be held guilty of having made no

attempt to save him. Wherefore, O Governor, you must march all the forces you have to his rescue,” said Yin Shang and Liang Xu.

Ma Zun found decision difficult, and while thinking over what was best to do, the arrival of Pei Xu, a messenger from Xiahou Mao, was announced. Pei Xu was taken to the Governor’s residence and there produced his dispatch and asked for aid. Soon came another man saying that the Anding troops had set out and calling upon Ma Zun to hasten. This decided for him, and he prepared his army.

Then, an outsider came in and said, “O Governor, you are the sport of one of Zhuge Liang’s wiles.”

All looked at him with surprise. He was one Jiang Wei. His father was Jiang Jiong, a former local official who had died in the court’s service while quelling one of the Qiang rebellions. Jiang Wei was well up in books, seeming to have read everything, and was also skilled in all warlike exercises. He had studied books on war. He was a very filial son and much esteemed. He held military rank of General.

Jiang Wei said to the Governor, “I hear Zhuge Liang is attacking Xiahou Mao, who is now in Nan’an most closely besieged. How then can this messenger have got out? Pei Xu is an unknown officer of whom no one has heard, and the other messenger from Anding bears no dispatch. The fact is the men are imposters sent to beguile you into leaving your city undefended so that it may be the more easily captured.”

The Governor began to understand. He said, “Were it not for you, I would fall into a ruse.”

Then Jiang Wei said, “But do not be anxious. I have a scheme by which we can capture Zhuge Liang and relieve Nan’an.”

The fates all changing bring the man that's needed,
And warlike skill comes from a source unheeded.

The next chapter will unfold the ruse proposed by Jiang Wei.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXII

CHAPTER 93

JIANG WEI GOES OVER TO ZHUGE LIANG; ZHUGE LIANG REVILES
WANG LANG.

Jiang Wei propounded his scheme of defense, saying, “Zhuge Liang will lay an ambush behind the city, induce our soldiers to go out and then take advantage of its undefended state to capture it. Now give me three thousand good soldiers, and I will place them in ambush at a certain critical place. Lead your troops out, but go slowly and not further than ten miles, and then turn to retire. However, look out for a signal, and if you see one, attack, for the attack will be double. If Zhuge Liang is there himself, we shall capture him.”

The Governor adopted this plan, gave the needed troops to Jiang Wei, who marched at once, and then Ma Zun went forth himself with Liang Qian. Only two civil officials—Liang Xu and Yin Shang—were left to guard the city.

Zhao Yun had been sent to lie in ambush in a secret place among the hills till the Tianshui army left the city, when he was to rush in and capture it. His spies reported the departure of the Governor and that only civil officials remained within the city. Zhao Yun sent on the news to those who were acting with him, Zhang Yi and Gao Xiang, that they might attack Ma Zun.

Zhao Yun and his five thousand troops then quickly marched to the city wall and called out, "I am Zhao Yun of Changshan. You have fallen into our trap, but if you will surrender quickly, you will save many lives."

But instead of being alarmed, Liang Xu looked down from the wall and said, "On the contrary, you have fallen into our trap. Only you do not know it yet!"

Zhao Yun began his attack on the walls. Soon there was heard a roar, and fire broke out all round, and forth came a youthful leader armed with a spear, riding a curvetting steed.

"Look at me, Jiang Wei of Tianshui!" cried he.

Zhao Yun made at him, but after a few bouts, he found Jiang Wei was getting very eager.

Zhao Yun was surprised, and wondered, *No one knows there is such an able man in Tianshui.*

As the fight went on, along came the two other forces under Ma Zun and Liang Qian, now returning. As Zhao Yun found he could not prevail, he set to cut an alley through and lead off his defeated troops. He was pursued, but Zhang Yi and Gao Xiang poured forth to save him, and he got away safely.

Zhuge Liang was surprised when he heard what had happened.

"Who is this?" said he. "Who has thus seen into the dark depths of my secret plan?"

A man of Nan'an, who happened to be there, told him, "He is Jiang Wei from Jicheng of Tianshui County. He is very filial to his mother. Civil skill and military prowess, wisdom and courage, he has all. Truly, he is a hero of the age."

Zhao Yun also praised his skill with the spear, which was superior to any other's.

Zhuge Liang said, "I want to take Tianshui now. I did not expect to find such a man as this."

The Shu army then advanced in force.

Jiang Wei went back to Ma Zun and said, "Zhao Yun's defeat will bring up Zhuge Liang with the main body. He will conclude that we shall be in the city, wherefore you had better divide your force into four. I, with one party, will go into hiding on the east so that I may cut off our enemies if they come that way. You, O Governor, and Liang Qian and Yin Shang will lie in ambush on the other sides of the city. Let Liang Xu and the common people go up on the wall to make the defense."

Ma Zun agreed to the plan and prepared everything.

Because of Jiang Wei, Zhuge Liang himself led the main army to Tianshui.

When they reached the city, Zhuge Liang gave a general order: "Attacking a city must be proceeded as soon as the army reaches it. At the rolling of drums, incite and urge the soldiers to advance with a rush. The keenness of the soldiers will be spoiled by any delay."

So this time, also, the army came straight up to the rampart. But they hesitated and dared not attack when they saw the flags flying in such good order and apparently such thorough preparation.

About the middle of the night, fires started up all around and a great shouting was heard. No one could see whence the Wei soldiers were coming, but there were answering shouts from the wall. The soldiers of Shu grew frightened and ran. Zhuge Liang mounted a horse and, with Guan Xing and Zhang Bao as escort, got out of danger. Looking back, they saw many mounted troops with torches, winding along like a huge serpent.

Zhuce Liang bade Guan Xing find out what this meant, and Guan Xing reported, "These are Jiang Wei's troops."

Zhuge Liang remarked, "An army owes more to its leadership than to its numbers. This Jiang Wei is a true genius."

Zhuge Liang led the army back to camp, and then he thought for a long time. Suddenly, he called up one of the Anding men and said, "Where is the mother of this Jiang Wei?"

"She lives in Jicheng," replied he.

Zhuge Liang called Wei Yan and said to him, "March off with a body of troops, announcing that you are going to take Jicheng. If Jiang Wei comes, let him enter the city."

Then Zhuge Liang asked, "What is the most important landmark in connection with this place?"

The man from Anding replied, "The storehouse of Tianshui is at Shanggui. If that is taken, the supplies are cut off."

This was good news, so Zhao Yun was sent to attack Shanggui, while Zhuge Liang made a camp ten miles south of the city.

The spies took the news of the movements of these three forces into Tianshui.

When Jiang Wei heard that one army was to attack his home place, he pleaded with Ma Zun, saying, "My mother is in Jicheng, and I am worried about the attacking force. Let me go to its defense, that I may keep the city and do my duty by my mother at the same time."

So Jiang Wei received command of three thousand troops and marched toward his home.

When Jiang Wei came near the walls, he saw a cohort under Wei Yan. He attacked. After a show of defense, Wei Yan retreated, and Jiang Wei entered the city. He closed the gates and prepared to defend the wall. Then he went home to see his mother.

In the same way, Liang Qian was allowed to enter Shanggui.

Then Zhuge Liang sent for his prisoner, Xiahou Mao, and, when he was brought to his tent, Zhuge Liang said suddenly, "Are you afraid of death?"

Xiahou Mao prostrated himself and begged for his life.

"Well, Jiang Wei of Tianshui, who, is now gone to guard Jicheng, has sent a letter to say that he would surrender if only that would secure your safety. Now I am going to let you go if you will promise to induce Jiang Wei to come over to me. Do you accept the condition?"

"I am willing to induce him to yield to you," said Xiahou Mao.

Zhuce Liang then gave his prisoner clothing and a horse and let him ride away. Nor did he send anyone to follow him, but let him choose his own road.

Having got outside, Xiahou Mao wanted to get away, but he was perfectly ignorant of the roads and knew not which to take. Presently, he

came across some people, apparently in flight, and he questioned them.

“We are Jicheng people,” said they. “Jiang Wei has surrendered the city and deserted to Zhuge Liang. The troops of Shu are looting and burning, and we have escaped. We are going to Shanggan.”

“Do you know who is holding Tianshui?”

“Governor Ma Zun is in there,” said they.

Hearing this, Xiahou Mao rode quickly toward Tianshui. Presently he met more people, evidently fugitives, leading sons and carrying daughters, who told the same story. By and by, he came to the gate of the city, and, as he was recognized, the wardens of the gate admitted him, and the Governor came to greet him and asked of his adventures. He told all that had happened, that Jiang Wei had surrendered and related what the fugitives had said.

“I did not think Jiang Wei would have gone over to Shu,” said the Governor sadly.

“It seems he thought by this to save you, Sir Commander-in-Chief,” said Liang Xu. “I am sure he has made only a pretense of surrendering.”

“Where is the pretense when it is a fact that he has surrendered?” said Xiahou Mao.

They were all perplexed. Then, at the third watch, the troops of Shu came to begin an attack. The fires round the wall were very bright, and there in the glare was seen Jiang Wei, armed and riding up and down under the ramparts calling out for Xiahou Mao. Xiahou Mao and Ma Zun ascended the wall, whence they saw Jiang Wei swaggering to and fro.

Seeing the chiefs on the wall, Jiang Wei called out, “I surrendered for the sake of you, O General. Why have you gone back on your word?”

“Why did you surrender to Shu after enjoying so much of Wei’s bounty?” said Xiahou Mao. “And why do you talk thus?”

“What do you mean by talking thus after writing me a letter telling me to surrender? You want to secure your own safety by involving me. But I have surrendered, and as I am a superior general in their service now, I see no sense in returning to Wei.”

So saying, he urged the soldiers on to the attack. The assault continued till dawn, when the besiegers drew off.

Now the appearance of Jiang Wei in this fashion was but a ruse. Zhuge Liang had found among his men one who resembled Jiang Wei and had disguised him so that Jiang Wei appeared to be leading the attack on the ramparts. In the smoke and fire during the night, no one could see through the disguise.

Zhuge Liang then led the army to attack Jicheng. The grain in the city was insufficient to feed the people. From the wall, Jiang Wei saw wagons of grain and forage being driven into the Shu camp, and he determined to try to secure some. So he led three thousand troops out of the city to attack the train of wagons. As soon as he appeared, the convoy abandoned the carts and fled. Jiang Wei seized them and was taking them into the city when he was met by a cohort under the command of Zhang Yi. They plunged into battle. After a short time, Wang Ping came to reinforce Zhang Yi, so that Jiang Wei was attacked on two sides. All Jiang Wei’s efforts were vain, and he had to abandon the spoils and try to reenter the city.

But as he drew near, he saw the walls were decorated with Shu ensigns, for Wei Yan had captured the place and was in possession. By desperate fighting, Jiang Wei got clear and set off for Tianshui. But he only had a few score horsemen left. Presently, the small force fell in with Zhang Bao, and at the end of this engagement, Jiang Wei found himself alone, a

single horseman. He reached Tianshui and hailed the gate. The watchers above the gate knew him and went to tell the Governor.

“This fellow has come to beguile me into opening the gate,” said Ma Zun.

So Ma Zun ordered the defenders to shoot at the fugitive. Jiang Wei turned back, but there was the army of Shu close at hand. He set off as fast as he could for Shanggui. But when he got there, Liang Qian hurled a volley of abuse at him.

“You traitor!” cried Liang Qian. “Dare you come to try to cajole me out of my city? I know you have surrendered to Shu.”

Liang Qian’s soldiers also began to shoot at the hapless fugitive.

Jiang Wei was helpless. He could not explain the real truth to those who doubted him. Lifting his eyes to Heaven, while tears rolled down his cheeks, he whipped up his steed and rode off toward Changan.

Before he had got very far, he came to a spot where were many heavy-foliaged trees. From among these appeared a company of soldiers, led by Guan Xing. Weary as were both horse and rider, there was no chance of successful resistance, and Jiang Wei turned back. But soon appeared a small chariot in which sat Zhuge Liang, dressed simply, as usual, in a white robe and carrying his feather fan.

“Friend Jiang Wei,” said Zhuge Liang, “is it not time to yield?”

Jiang Wei stopped and pondered. There was Zhuge Liang, and Guan Xing’s troops were behind him. There was no way out. So he dismounted and bowed his head in submission.

Zhuce Liang at once got out of the chariot and bade him welcome, taking him by the hand and saying, “Ever since I left my humble cottage, I have been seeking some worthy person to whom I might impart the

knowledge that my life has been spent in acquiring. I have found no one till this moment, and now my desire is attained. You are the one.”

Jiang Wei bowed and thanked him, and they two returned to camp.

Soon after their arrival, the new recruit and Zhuge Liang consulted about how to capture Tianshui and Shanggui. Jiang Wei had a scheme.

“The two civil officers in charge of the city, Yin Shang and Liang Xu, are excellent friends of mine,” said he, “and I will write a letter to each, shoot it over the wall tied to an arrow, and ask them to help by raising a revolt within the city.”

They decided upon this, and two secret letters were duly written and sent flying over the ramparts, where they were found and taken to the Governor. Ma Zun was doubtful what action to take and consulted with Xiahou Mao, asking him to decide.

Said Ma Zun, “Yin Shang and Liang Xu are in league with Jiang Wei, and they plot to aid the enemy from within. What should be done?”

“Put both the men to death,” Xiahou Mao replied.

But Yin Shang heard what was told and said to Liang Xu, “The best course for us is to yield the city to Shu and trust them to treat us well as our recompense.”

That evening, Xiahou Mao sent many times to summon the two officers to him, but they thought it too great a risk to answer the call. Instead, they armed themselves and rode at the head of their own soldiers to the gates, opened them, and let in the troops of Shu. Ma Zun and Xiahou Mao fled by the west gate with a hundred faithful followers and sought refuge with the Qiang tribespeople.

Liang Xu and Yin Shang welcomed Zhuge Liang, who entered the city, restored order, and calmed the people.

This done, Zhuge Liang asked how he might capture Shanggui.

Liang Xu said, "My brother, Liang Qian, holds that city, and I will call upon him to yield it."

Thereupon, Liang Xu rode over to Shanggui and called out his brother to submit. Zhuge Liang rewarded the two brothers and then made Liang Xu Governor of Tianshui; Yin Shang, Magistrate of Jicheng; and Liang Qian, Magistrate of Shanggui. Next, the army prepared to advance.

His officers asked, "O Prime Minister, why do you not pursue and capture Xiahou Mao?"

Zhugé Liang replied, "I let him go as I would release a duck. In my friend Jiang Wei, I recognized a phoenix."

Such awe and fear seized upon the country when these exploits of Zhuge Liang were heard of that many other cities simply opened their gates without making any resistance. Zhuge Liang brought all soldiers from Hanzhong, cavalry and footsoldiers, and marched on to Qishan.

When the Shu army reached the west bank of the River Wei, the scouts reported their movements in Luoyang, and, at a court held in the first year of the era of Calm Peace (AD 227), the ministers told the Ruler of Wei of the threatened invasion.

They said, "Xiahou Mao, the Imperial Son-in-Law, has lost the three counties and fled to the Qiangs. The enemy has reached Qishan, and their advance columns are on the west bank of River Wei. We pray that an army be sent to repulse them."

The Emperor, Cao Rui, was alarmed and asked, "Who shall go out and drive off the enemy for me?"

Minister Wang Lang stepped forward and said, "I observed that whenever General Cao Zhen was sent by the late Emperor on any expedition, he succeeded. Why not send him to drive off these soldiers of Shu?"

Cao Rui approved of the suggestion. Whereupon, he called up Cao Zhen and said to him, "The late Emperor confided me to your guardianship. You cannot sit by while the enemy ravages the country."

Cao Zhen replied, "Your Majesty, my talents are but poor and unequal to the task you propose."

"You are a trusted minister of state, and you really may not refuse this task. Old and worn as I am, I will use the little strength left me to accompany you," said Wang Lang.

"After the bounties I have received, I cannot refuse," replied Cao Zhen. "But I must ask for an assistant."

"You have only to name him, O Noble One," said the Emperor.

So Cao Zhen named Guo Huai, a man of Yangqu, whose official rank was Lord of Sheting; he was also Imperial Protector of Yongzhou.

Thereupon Cao Zhen was appointed Commander-in-Chief, and the ensigns of rank were conferred upon him. Guo Huai was appointed his second, and Wang Lang was created Instructor of the Army. Wang Lang was then already old, seventy-six.

The army of Cao Zhen consisted of two hundred thousand troops, the best from both capitals. His brother, Cao Zun, was made Leader of the Van, with an assistant, Zhu Zan, General Who Opposes Brigands. The army moved out in the eleventh month of that year, and the Ruler of Wei went with it to the outside of the west gate.

Cao Zhen marched by way of Changan and camped on the west bank of the River Wei. At a council, which the Commander-in-Chief called to consider the best mode of attack, Wang Lang asked that he might be allowed to parley with the enemy.

Said Wang Lang, "Let the army be drawn up in complete battle order and unfurl all the banners. I will go out and call a parley with Zhuge Liang, at which I will make him yield to us without a blow, and the army of Shu shall march home again."

Cao Zhen agreed to the plan. So orders were given to take the early meal at the fourth watch and have the men fall in with their companies and files at daylight, all in review order. Everything was to be grand and imposing, the flags fluttering and the drums rolling, every soldier in his place. Just before this display, a messenger was to deliver a declaration of war.

Next day, when the armies were drawn up facing each other in front of the Qishan Mountains, the soldiers of Shu saw that their enemies were fine, bold warriors, very different from those that Xiahou Mao had brought against them. Then, after three rolls of the drums, Minister of the Interior Wang Lang mounted his horse and rode out, next to him rode Commander-in-Chief Cao Zhen, and followed behind was Deputy Commander Guo Huai. The two Leaders of the Van remained in charge of the army.

Then a messenger rode to the front and called out in a loud voice, "We request the leader of the opposing army to come out to a parley."

At this, within the Shu army, an opening was made at the main standard, through which came out Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, who took up their stations right and left. Then followed two lines of generals, and beneath the standard, in the center of the array, was seen a four-wheeled carriage wherein sat Zhuge Liang, with turban, white robe and black sash.

A leather fan was in his hand. He advanced with the utmost dignity. Looking up, he saw three commander umbrellas and flags bearing large white characters. In the middle was an aged, white-haired figure: Minister Wang Lang.

He intends to deliver an oration, thought Zhuge Liang. I must answer as best I may.

His carriage was then pushed to the front beyond the line of battle, and he directed one of his officers to reply, saying, "The Prime Minister of the Hans is willing to speak with Minister Wang Lang."

Wang Lang advanced. Zhuge Liang saluted him from the carriage with raised hands, and Wang Lang replied from horseback with an inclination. Then, Wang Lang began his oration.

"I am happy to meet you, Noble Sir. Your reputation has been long known to me. Since you recognize the decrees of Heaven and are acquainted with the conditions of the world, why do you, without any excuse, lead out such an army?"

Zhuce Liang replied, "How mean you, 'no excuse'? I hold an edict to destroy rebels."

Wang Lang replied, "Heaven has its mutations and changes its instruments from time to time. The supreme dignity comes at last to the person of virtue. This is the inevitable and immutable law. In the days of Emperors Huan and Ling arose the Yellow Scarves rebellion, and the whole earth was involved in wrangling and warfare. Later, in the eras of Inauguration of Tranquility and Rebuilt Tranquility, Dong Zhuo arose in revolt, a revolt which Li Jue and Guo Si continued after Dong Zhuo had been destroyed. Next, Yuan Shu usurped the imperial style, and his brother Yuan Shao played the man of might and valor in the land of Yejun. Liu Biao occupied Jingzhou, and Lu Bu seized and held Xuzhou. Thus rebels have

arisen in the land like a swarm of wasps, and bold spirits have followed their own will, to the danger of the supreme dignity and the peril of the people.

“Then the Founder of Wei, Emperor Cao, swept away rebellion in eight directions, purged the land, and restored order. All hearts turned to him in gratitude, and the people of the four quarters admired his virtue. He gained his position by no manifestation of force; it was simply the will of Heaven. His son and successor, Emperor Pi, was wise and warlike, adequate to the great heritage and fitted to wield supreme power. Wherefore, in accordance with the will of Heaven and the desires of humans, and following the example of the earliest emperors, he took his place as arbiter of the Central Government, whereby the myriad countries are ordered and governed. Can any maintain that it was not the desire of Heaven and the wish of the people?

“Noble Sir, you are a man of natural talent and acquired attainments, worthy, you say yourself, to be compared with Guan Zhong and Yue Yi. Why, then, place yourself in opposition to the decree of Heaven and turn away from the desire of humankind to do this thing? You cannot be ignorant of the wise, old saying: ‘He who accords with Heaven shall flourish, while he who opposes shall be destroyed.’

“Now the armies of Wei are countless legions, and their able leaders are beyond number. Can the glowworm in the parched stubble rival the glorious moon in the sky? If you will turn down your weapons and throw aside your armors and dutifully yield, you shall not lose your rank. The state will have tranquility and the people rejoice. Is not that a desirable consummation?”

Zhuge Liang laughed.

Said he, "I regarded you as an old and tried servant of the Han Dynasty and thought you would hold some noble discourse. Could I imagine you would talk so foully? I have a word to say that all the armies may hear. In the days of Emperors Huan and Ling, the rule of Han declined, the officers of state were the authors of evil, the government fell into confusion, and misfortune settled on the country. Trouble was rife in every quarter. The Yellow Scarves, Dong Zhuo, Li Jue and Guo Si, and other rebels arose one after another, deposing the emperor and afflicting the people. Because the household officers were corrupt and foolish, and the court officials were as brutish beasts, living only that they might feed; because high people, wolfishly cruel in their hearts, savagely mean in their conduct, were in office one after another, and slavish flatterers bending slavish knees confounded the administration, therefore the Throne became as a waste heap, and the people were trodden into the mire.

"I know all about you. You came from the eastern seashore. You got into office with a recommendation of filial piety and integrity; you properly aided your sovereign and supported the state, cared for the tranquility of Han and magnified the Lius. But could one have imagined that you would turn and assist rebels and enter into a plot to usurp the Throne? Indeed, your crime is great and your guilt heavy. Heaven and Earth will not suffer you. The inhabitants of this land would devour you.

"But happily, the design of Heaven is to retain the glorious dynasty. The late Emperor Bei continued the line in the River Lands, and I have been entrusted by the present Emperor with the task of destroying you rebels.

"Since you are such a false and specious minister, you have but to hide your body and cover your head, concern yourself about your belly and your back. Do not come out before the armies to rave about the decrees of Heaven. You fool and rebel! Mark you, today is your last day. This day,

even you descend to the Nine Golden Springs. How will you stand before the twenty-four emperors of Latter Han that you will meet there? Retire, you rebel! Go tell your rebellious companions to come and fight one battle with me that shall decide the victory!”

Fierce wrath filled the old man’s breast. With one despairing cry, Wang Lang fell to the earth, dead.



This exploit of Zhuge Liang’s has been lauded in verse:

In west Qin, when the armies met in the field,
He, the bold one, singly faced a myriad warriors,
And with a simple weapon, just his tongue,
He did to death a wicked minister.



After Wang Lang had fallen, Zhuge Liang waved the fan toward Cao Zhen and said, “As for you, I leave you alone for this occasion. Go and get your army in order for tomorrow’s battle.”

The chariot turned and left the field. Both armies retired for that day. To Cao Zhen fell the melancholy duty of rendering the last services to the aged Minister and setting his coffin on its journey to Changan.

Then, said General Guo Huai, “Zhuge Liang will certainly think the army occupied with mourning and make a night attack. Let us anticipate him and set out an ambush about our camp. Let two bodies of our troops be hidden outside and two others take the occasion to raid the camp of the enemy.”

“I thought of such a scheme myself,” said Cao Zhen. “It exactly suits my plans.”

So Cao Zhen gave orders to Cao Zun and Zhu Zan: “You are to take ten thousand troops each, get away by the rear of the mountain, and look out for the passing of the soldiers of Shu. When they have gone by, you are to make for their camp. But you are only to attempt a raid if they have left.”

Cao Zun and Zhu Zan took the order and left. Then the Commander-in-Chief arranged with Guo Huai each to lead a force and hide outside the camp to wait for the raid of Shu. Only a few soldiers were to be left within to make a fire if the enemy were seen to be coming. And all generals set about the necessary preparations.

When Zhuge Liang reached his tent, he called to him Zhao Yun and Wei Yan, and said to them, “You two are to make a night attack.”

“Cao Zhen is a man of experience and will be on the lookout,” ventured Wei Yan.

“But that is just what I want: I want him to know we shall attack tonight. He will then put some troops in hiding behind the Qishan Mountains who will make for our camp as soon as they see us pass toward theirs. I am sending you to let yourselves be seen passing the hill, but you are to camp behind it and at a distance. When the soldiers of Wei attack this camp, you will see a signal. Then Wei Yan will hold the approach to the hill, and Zhao Yun will make his way back in fighting order. He will meet the army of Wei returning and will let them pass. The enemy will assuredly fall to fighting among themselves, and we shall finish the battle.”

These two having gone away to carry out their portions of the plan, Zhuge Liang next called up Guan Xing and Zhang Bao: "You are to take each ten thousand troops and hide in the high road to the mountain. When the troops of Wei come, let them pass and then march along the road they came by to their camp that they have just left."

These two having left, Zhuge Liang placed Ma Dai, Wang Ping, Zhang Ni, and Zhang Yi in ambush about the camp.

Within the camp, the tents and shelters were left standing as if the camp was occupied, while wood and straw were heaped up, ready to give the signal. This done, Zhuge Liang and his officers retired to the rear of the camp to watch the proceedings.

On the side of Wei, the two Van Leaders, Cao Zun and Zhu Zan, left at dusk and hastened toward the camp of Shu. About the second watch, they saw troops busily moving about in front of the hill.

Cao Zun thought to himself, *General Guo Huai is an excellent strategist and of wonderful prevision.*

Then he hastened the march, and in the third watch reached the camp of Shu. He at once dashed into the enclosure, but only to find it totally deserted. Not a man was visible. At once, he knew he had stumbled into a trap, and began to withdraw. Then the flames sprang up. Zhu Zan arrived all ready to fight, and the two bodies of troops, thrown into confusion, fought with each other till the two leaders met, when they found out they were fighting their own men.

As they were restoring order, on came the four bodies of troops of Shu under Ma Dai, Wang Ping, Zhang Ni, and Zhang Yi, who had lain in ambush ready for them. Cao Zun and Zhu Zan, with more than a hundred of those nearest to them, ran away to get to the high road. But before long, the

rolling drums announced another body of their enemy, and their flight was stopped by Zhao Yun.

“Whither go ye, O rebel leaders?” cried Zhao Yun. “Stop, for here is death!”

But Cao Zun and Zhu Zan still fled. Then came up a force led by Wei Yan and completed the defeat. The soldiers of Wei were wholly beaten and ran away to their own camp. But the guard left in the camp thought they were the enemy come to raid, so they lit the fires, and at this signal Cao Zhen rushed up from one side and Guo Huai from the other, and a fierce fight with their own troops began.

While this was going on, three cohorts under Wei Yan, Guan Xing, and Zhang Bao arrived from three points, and a great and confused battle began. The soldiers of Wei were driven off and chased for three miles.

In the fight, Wei lost many leaders, and Zhuge Liang gained a great success. Cao Zhen and Guo Huai got together their beaten troops and went back to their own camp.

When they discussed the fight, Cao Zhen said, “The enemy are too strong for us. Have you any plan to drive them away?”

Replied Guo Huai, “Our defeat is one of the ordinary events of war. Let us not be cast down. I have a plan to suggest that will disorder them so that one body cannot help the other, and they will all be compelled to flee.”

Wei leaders fail and sadly send

To pray tribespeople help to lend.

The plan will be unfolded in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXII

CHAPTER 94

ZHUGE LIANG DEFEATS THE QIANGS IN A SNOWSTORM; SIMA YI CAPTURES MENG DA BY A RAPID MARCH.

Guo Huai laid before his colleague the scheme to overcome the army of Shu, saying, "The Qiang tribes have paid tribute regularly since the days of the Founder of Wei. Emperor Pi regarded them with favor. Now, let us hold such points of vantage as we may, while we send secret emissaries to engage their help in exchange for kindly treatment. We may get the Qiangs to attack Shu and engage their attention, while we gather a large army to smite them at another place. Thus attacking, how can we help gaining a great victory?"

A messenger was sent forthwith bearing letters to the Qiang tribespeople.

The King of the western Qiangs was named Cheli Ji. He had rendered yearly tribute since the days of Cao Cao. He had two ministers, one for civil and the other for military affairs, named, respectively, Prime Minister Ya Dan and Chief Leader Yue Ji.

The letter was accompanied by presents of gold and pearls, and when the messenger arrived, he first sought Prime Minister Ya Dan, to whom he gave gifts and whose help he begged. Thus he gained an interview with the King, to whom he presented the letter and the gifts. The King accepted both and called his counselors to consider the letter.

Ya Dan said, "We have had regular intercourse with the Wei kingdom. Now that Cao Zhen asks our aid and promises an alliance, we ought to

accede to his request.”

Cheli Ji agreed that it was so, and he ordered his two chief ministers to raise an army of two hundred fifty thousand trained soldiers, archers and crossbowmen, spearmen and swordsmen, warriors who flung maces and hurled hammers. Beside these various weapons, the tribesmen used chariots covered with iron plates nailed on. They prepared much grain and fodder and many spare weapons, all of which they loaded upon these iron-clad chariots. The chariots were drawn by camels or teams of horses. The carts or chariots were known as “iron chariots.”

The two leaders took leave of their King and went straightway to Xiping Pass.

The commander in charge of the Pass, Han Zhen, at once sent intelligence to Zhuge Liang, who asked, “Who will go to attack the Qiangs?”

Guan Xing and Zhang Bao said they would go.

Then Zhuge Liang said, “You shall be sent. But as you are ignorant of the road and the people, Ma Dai shall accompany you.”

To Ma Dai, he said, “You know the disposition of the Qiangs from your long residence there. You shall go as guide.”

They chose out fifty thousand veterans for the expedition. When they had marched a few days and drew near their enemy, Guan Xing went in advance with a hundred horsemen and got first sight of them from a hill. The Qiangs were marching, the long line of iron chariots one behind another in close order. Then they halted and camped, their weapons piled all along the line of chariots like the ramparts of a moated city. Guan Xing studied them for a long time, quite at a loss to think how to overcome them. He came back to camp and consulted with his two colleagues.

Ma Dai said, "We will see tomorrow what they will do when we make our array, and discuss our plans when we know more."

So the next day they drew up their army in three divisions, Guan Xing's division being in the center, Zhang Bao's on the left, and Ma Dai's on the right. Thus they advanced.

The enemy also drew up in battle order. Their Chief Leader, Yue Ji, had an iron mace in his hand and a graven bow hung at his waist. He rode forward on a curvetting steed boldly enough. Guan Xing gave the order for all three divisions to go forward. Then the enemy's ranks opened in the center and out rolled the iron chariots like a great wave. At the same time, the Qiangs shot arrows and bolts, and the men of Shu could not stand against them.

The wing divisions under Ma Dai and Zhang Bao retired, and the Qiangs were thus enabled to surround the center. In spite of every effort, Guan Xing could not get free, for the iron chariots were like a city wall and no opening could be found. The troops of Shu were absolutely helpless, and Guan Xing made for the mountains in hope of finding a road through.

As it grew dark, a Qiang leader with a black flag approached, his warriors like a swarm of wasps about him.

Presently, the leader cried out to him, "Youthful general, flee not. I am Yue Ji!"

But Guan Xing only hastened forward, plying his whip to urge his steed. Then he suddenly came on a deep gully, and there seemed nothing but to turn and fight. Yue Ji came close and struck at him with the mace. Guan Xing evaded the blow, but it fell upon his steed and knocked it over into water. Guan Xing went into the water, too.

Presently, he heard a great noise again behind him. Yue Ji and his troops had found a way down into the gully and were coming at him down the stream. Guan Xing braced himself for a struggle in the water.

Then he saw Zhang Bao and Ma Dai coming up on the bank fighting with, and driving off, the Qiangs. Yue Ji was struck by Zhang Bao, and he, too, fell into the gully. Guan Xing gripped his sword and was about to launch a stroke at Yue Ji as he came up, when Yue Ji jumped out of the water and ran away.

At once, Guan Xing caught the steed Yue Ji had left, led it up the bank, and soon had it ready to mount. Then he girded on his sword, got on the horse, and joined the battle with his colleagues.

After driving off the Qiangs, Guan Xing, Zhang Bao, and Ma Dai gathered together and rode back. They quickly gained the camp.

“I do not know how to overcome these men,” said Ma Dai. “Let me protect the camp while you go back and ask the Prime Minister what we should do.”

Guan Xing and Zhang Bao started at once and made the best of their way back. They told Zhuge Liang what had happened. He at once sent off Zhao Yun and Wei Yan to go into ambush. After this, he went himself with thirty thousand troops and Jiang Wei, Zhang Yi, Guan Xing, and Zhang Bao and soon came to Ma Dai’s camp. The day after, from the summit of a hill, Zhuge Liang surveyed the country and the enemy, who were coming on in a ceaseless stream.

“It is not difficult,” said Zhuge Liang.

He called up Ma Dai and Zhang Yi and gave them certain orders.

They having gone, he turned to Jiang Wei, saying, "My friend, do you know how to overcome them?"

"The enemy only depend upon force and courage. They shall not expect this fine strategy," was the reply.

"You know," said Zhuge Liang, smiling. "Those dark clouds and the strong north wind mean snow. Then I can do what I wish."

The two leaders, Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, were sent into ambush, and Jiang Wei went out to offer battle. But he was to retire before the iron chariots. At the entrance to the camp were displayed many flags, but the soldiers that should serve under them were not there.

It was now full winter, the twelfth month, and the snow had come. The army of Shu went out to offer battle. When the iron chariots came forward, they retired and thus led the Qiangs to the gate of the camp, Jiang Wei going to its rear. The Qiangs came to the gate and stopped to look. They heard the strumming of a lute, but there were no soldiers there; the flags meant nothing. They told Yue Ji, and he suspected some ruse. Instead of entering, he went back to Prime Minister Ya Dan and told him.

"It is a ruse," said Ya Dan. "Zhuge Liang's base trick is the pretense of a pretense, and you had better attack."

So Yue Ji led his troops again to the camp gate, and there he saw Zhuge Liang with a lute, just getting into his chariot. With a small escort, he went toward the back of the camp. The tribesmen rushed into the camp and caught sight of the light chariot again just as it disappeared into a wood.

Then, said Ya Dan, "There may be an ambush, but I think we need not be afraid of these soldiers."

Hence, they decided to pursue. Ahead of them they saw the division under Jiang Wei hastening off through the snow. Yue Ji's rage boiled up at this sight, and he urged his men to go faster. The snow had filled in the roads among the hills, making every part look like a level plain.

As they marched, one reported that some of the enemy were appearing from the rear of the hills. Some thought this meant an ambush, but Ya Dan said it did not matter and they need not fear. He urged them to hasten.

Shortly after this, they heard a roaring as if the hills were rending asunder and the earth falling in, and the pursuers on foot fell one atop of the other into great pits that were invisible in the snow. The iron chariots, being close behind and hurrying along, could not stop, and they went into the pits also. Those still farther in the rear halted, but just as they were facing about, Guan Xing and Zhang Bao came up, one on either side, and attacked. Myriads of bolts flew through the air. Then three other divisions under Jiang Wei, Ma Dai, and Zhang Yi arrived, and confusion was worse than ever.

The Qiang leader, Yue Ji, fled to the rear and was making for the mountains when he met Guan Xing, who slew him in the first encounter. Prime Minister Ya Dan was captured by Ma Dai and taken to the main camp. The soldiers scattered.

Hearing of the capture of one leader, Zhuge Liang took his seat in his tent and bade them bring the prisoner. He told the guards to loose his bonds, and he had wine brought to refresh him and soothed him with kindly words.

Ya Dan was grateful for this kindness, and felt more so when Zhuge Liang said, "My master, the Emperor of the Great Han, sent me to destroy those who are in revolt. Why are you helping them? But I will release you, and you will return to your master and say that we are neighbors and we

will swear an oath of everlasting friendship, and tell him to listen no more to the words of those rebels.”

Ya Dan was released and so were all the soldiers that had been captured, and all their stuff was given back to them. They left for their own country.

The Qiangs being thus disposed of, Zhuge Liang quickly marched again to Qishan. He sent letters to Capital Chengdu announcing his success.

Meanwhile, Cao Zhen anxiously waited for news of his expected allies. Then a scout came in with the news that the army of Shu had broken camp and were marching away.

“That is because the Qiangs have attacked,” said Guo Huai gleefully, and the two made ready to pursue.

They saw ahead of them the army of Shu seemed to be in confusion. The Van Leader Cao Zun led the pursuit.

Suddenly, as he pressed on, there came a roll of drums, followed by the appearance of a cohort led by Wei Yan, who cried, “Stop! You rebels!”

But Cao Zun did not obey the summons. He dashed forward to meet the attack. He was killed in the third encounter. His colleague Zhu Zan in similar fashion fell in with a cohort under Zhao Yun, to whose long spear he soon fell victim. The loss of these two made Cao Zhen and Guo Huai hesitate, and they made to retire.

But before they could face about, they heard the drums of an army in their rear, and Guan Xing and Zhang Bao came out and surrounded them. Cao Zhen and Guo Huai made a stand for a time, but were soon worsted

and fled. The army of Shu pursued the beaten enemy to the bank of the River Wei, where they took possession of the Wei camp.

Cao Zhen was greatly chagrined at his defeat and sad at the loss of his generals. He send a report of his misfortune to his master and asked for reinforcements.

At the court of Wei, one of the ministers told the story, saying, "Cao Zhen has been defeated repeatedly, and his two Van Leaders were slain. Further, his Qiang allies have suffered great loss. Cao Zhen is sending for help, and the case is very urgent."

Cao Rui was alarmed and asked for someone to say how to drive off the victorious foe.

Thereupon, Hua Xin said, "It will be necessary for Your Majesty to go in person. You should call together all the nobles, and each will have to exert himself. Unless this is done, Capital Changan will be lost and the whole Land Within the Passes be in danger."

But Imperial Guardian Zhong Yao opposed him. Said he, "The knowledge of every leader must exceed that of those led; then only will he be able to control them. Sun Zi the Strategist sums it up very briefly: 'Know the enemy, know thyself, and every battle is a victory.' I know Cao Zhen has had great experience in the field, but he is no match for Zhuge Liang. Still, there is such a match, and I will pledge my whole family that he will succeed. But Your Majesty may be unwilling to listen to me."

The Ruler of Wei replied, "You are a minister of high rank and old. If you know any wise person able to repel these soldiers of Shu, call him without delay and ease my mind."

Then said Zhong Yao, "When Zhuge Liang decided to invade us, he was afraid of the one man I will name. Wherefore, he spread calumnies concerning him, raising suspicion in Your Majesty's mind that you might dismiss him. That done, Zhuge Liang invaded. Now, employ this man again, and the enemy will retire."

"Who is it?" asked the Ruler of Wei.

"I mean the Imperial Commander of the Flying Cavalry, Sima Yi."

"I have long regretted my action," said Cao Rui. "Where now is friend Sima Yi?"

"He is at the city of Wancheng, idle."

An edict was prepared recalling Sima Yi and restoring him to his rank and titles, and conferring upon him the new title Commander-in-Chief of the Western Forces and General Who Pacifies the West. All troops of Nanyang were set in motion, and Cao Rui led them to Changan. At the same time, Cao Rui ordered Sima Yi to be there to meet him on a certain day. And the orders were sent by a swift messenger to the city of Wancheng.

At this time, Zhuge Liang greatly rejoiced at the success he had had. He was at Qishan, busy with plans for other victories, when Li Yan, who was in command at the Palace of Eternal Peace, sent his son Li Teng to the camp. Zhuge Liang concluded that such a visit could only mean that Wu had invaded them, and he was, in consequence, cast down. However, he summoned Li Teng to his tent, and when asked the object of his mission, Li Teng replied that he had joyful news to impart.

"What is your joyful news?" said Zhuge Liang.

“Formerly, Meng Da deserted to Wei, but only because he could do nothing else. Cao Pi thought much of his capabilities, treated him most generously, kept him at his side, gave him titles of General Who Establishes Strong Arms and Lord of Pingyang, and appointed him to the posts of Governor of Xincheng and Commander of Shangyong and Jincheng, and so on. But when Cao Pi died, all was changed. In Cao Rui’s court were many who were jealous of Meng Da’s influence and power, so that he enjoyed no peace.

“He used to talk about being originally one of the Shu leaders, and he was forced to do so-and-so. Lately, he has sent several confidants with letters to my father asking that he would state his case to you as to the happenings. When the five armies came upon Shu, he wanted to rejoin the River Lands. Now he is at Xincheng, and, hearing you are attacking Wei, he proposes to lead the army of the three counties about Xincheng, Jincheng, and Shangyong to attack Luoyang while you attack Changan, whereby both capitals will be taken. I have brought with me his messenger and his letters.”

This was good news, and the bearer was fittingly rewarded. But at that moment came the news that Cao Rui was leading an army to Changan and had recalled the banished Sima Yi to office. This piece of bad news saddened Zhuge Liang not a little.

He told Ma Su, who said, “Cao Rui should not be your worry. If he goes to Changan, we will march there and capture him on the road, and there will be an end of him.”

“Do you think I fear him?” said Zhuge Liang bitterly. “But the recall of Sima Yi is another matter; that troubles me. And Meng Da’s proposal will avail nothing if he comes across this man. Meng Da is no match for

him. He will be captured, and, if he should be, the Middle Land will be hard to conquer.”

“Why not put Meng Da on his guard then?” said Ma Su.

Zhuge Liang decided to write, and the letter was dispatched immediately.

Meng Da was then at Xincheng, anxiously expecting the return of his last confidential messenger, when, one day, the man returned and gave him this letter from Zhuge Liang himself:

“Your last letter has convinced me of your loyal rectitude, and I still remember with joy our old friendship. If your plan succeeds, you will certainly stand in the first rank of most worthy ministers. But I scarcely need impress upon you the extreme necessity for most perfect secrecy. Be very careful whom you trust. Fear everyone, guard against everyone. This news of the recall of Sima Yi and the proposed junction of armies at Changan is very serious. If a word reaches Sima Yi, he will come to you first. Therefore, take every precaution and do not regard this as a matter of unimportance.”

“They say Zhuge Liang leaves nothing to chance,” said Meng Da, smiling as he read. “This proves it.”

He lost no time in preparing a reply, which he sent also by a trusty messenger. This letter was like this:

“I acknowledge your most valuable advice, but is it possible that I should be remiss? For my part, I do not think that Sima Yi’s affair need

cause anxiety, for Wancheng is three hundred miles from Luoyang and four hundred miles from Xincheng. Should he hear anything, it would take a month to send a memorial to the capital and get a reply. My ramparts here are strong and my forces posted in the best positions. Let him come! I am not afraid of the result, so you, O Prime Minister, need feel no anxiety. You have only to wait for the good news of success.”

Zhuge Liang read the letter and threw it on the ground, stamping his foot with rage.

“Meng Da is a dead man!” said he. “A victim of Sima Yi.”

“Why do you say that?” said Ma Su.

“What does *The Art of War* say? ‘Attack before the enemy is prepared; do what he does not expect.’ What is the use of reckoning upon a month’s delay for sending up a memorial? Cao Rui’s commission has already gone, and Sima Yi may strike whom he will. He will not have to wait to memorialize the Throne. Ten days after he hears of Meng Da’s defection, he will be upon Meng Da with an army, and Meng Da will be helpless.”

The others agreed. However, Zhuge Liang sent the messenger back again with a message:

“If the matter has not yet actually started, no other person is to be told of it, for if anyone knows, it shall certainly come to nothing.”

And the messenger left for Xincheng.

In his idle retreat in Wancheng, Sima Yi had heard of his master’s ill success against the armies of Shu, and the news made him very sad. He

lifted up his eyes and sighed.

He had two sons, Sima Shi the elder and Sima Zhao, both clever and ambitious, and both earnest students of military books. One day, they were present when their father seemed very cast down, and Sima Shi asked his father the reason.

“You would not understand,” said the father.

“I think you are grieving because the Ruler of Wei does not use you,” replied Sima Shi.

“But they will send for you presently,” said Sima Zhao.

The prophecy was not long in fulfillment, for even then, the bearer of the command stood at the gate, and the servant announced a messenger from the court bearing a commission.

As soon as he heard its terms, Sima Yi set about ordering the armies of Wancheng. Soon came a messenger from Governor Shen Yi of Jincheng with a secret message for Sima Yi. The messenger was taken into a private chamber, and his message was that Meng Da was on the point of rebellion. The leakage of this news was due to Li Gu, a confidential subordinate of Meng Da, and Deng Xian, Meng Da’s nephew. Li Gu and Deng Xian went to confess the plot in exchange for a promise of amnesty.

Sima Yi smote his forehead.

“This is the Emperor’s great good fortune, high as Heaven itself. Zhuge Liang’s army is at Qishan already, and all people’s courage is at the brink of breakdown. The Emperor must go to Changan, and if he does not use me soon, Meng Da will carry out his plan; his plot will succeed, and both capitals will be lost. Meng Da is surely in league with Zhuge Liang, and if I can seize this Meng Da before he makes any move, that will damp Zhuge Liang’s spirits and he will retreat.”

His elder son, Sima Shi, remarked, "It is necessary to memorialize the Throne."

"No," replied his father, "that would take a month, and delay would mean failure."

Sima Yi gave orders to prepare to advance by double-rapid marches and threatened death to all loiterers. In order to avert suspicion, he sent letters to Meng Da by the hand of Military Adviser Liang Ji to tell Meng Da to prepare to join the western expedition.

Sima Yi quickly followed Liang Ji. After two days' march, Sima Yi fell in with an army of General Xu Huang over the hills.

Xu Huang got an interview with Sima Yi, and he said, "The Emperor has arrived at Changan to lead an expedition against Shu. Whither is the Commander-in-Chief going?"

Sima Yi, in a low voice, said to him, "Meng Da is on the verge of rebellion, and I am going to seize him."

"Let me go as your Van Leader," said Xu Huang.

So Xu Huang's troops were joined to the expedition and marched in the van. Sima Yi commanded the center, and his sons brought up the rear.

Two days further on, some of the scouts captured Meng Da's confidential messenger and, with him, Zhuge Liang's reply.

Sima Yi said to the man, "I will let you live if you tell all you know."

So the messenger told all about the letters and messages he had taken from one to the other.

When Sima Yi read, he remarked, "All able people think the same way. Our plan would have been foiled by Zhuge Liang's cleverness unless, by the good luck of the Emperor, this messenger had been captured. Now Meng Da will be helpless."

The army pressed on still more rapidly.

Meng Da had arranged for his stroke with Governor Shen Yi of Jincheng and Governor Shen Dan of Shangyong and was awaiting the day he had fixed. But Shen Yi and Shen Dan were only pretending to abet him, although they went on training and drilling their troops to keep up appearances till the soldiers of Wei could arrive. To Meng Da, they pretended delay in their transport as the reason for being unable to start. And he believed them.

Just then Liang Ji came, and when he had been ceremoniously received, he produced the order from Sima Yi and said, "The Commander-in-Chief has received the edict of the Emperor to call in all the forces in this area, and he has sent me to direct you to hold your troops in readiness to march."

"On what day does the Commander-in-Chief start?" asked Meng Da.

"He is just about starting now, and is on the way to Changan" replied Liang Ji.

Meng Da smiled inwardly, for, this being so, he saw success before him. He gave a banquet to Liang Ji. After Liang Ji took his leave, Meng Da sent to his fellow conspirators, Shen Yi and Shen Dan, to say the first step must be taken next day by exchanging the banners of Wei for those of Han and marching to attack Luoyang.

Then, the watchmen reported a great cloud of dust in the distance as though an army were coming. Meng Da was surprised and went up on the ramparts to see for himself. Soon, he made out the banner of Xu Huang leading. He ran down from the wall and, in a state of trepidation, ordered

the raising of the drawbridge. Xu Huang still came on and in due time stood on the bank of the moat.

Then Xu Huang called out, "Let the traitor Meng Da yield quickly!"

Meng Da, in a rage, opened upon him with arrows, and Xu Huang was wounded in the forehead. He was helped to a place of safety while the arrows flew down in great numbers. When the soldiers of Wei retired, Meng Da opened the gates and went in pursuit. But the whole of Sima Yi's army soon came up, and the banners stood so thick that they hid the sun.

"This is what Zhuge Liang foresaw!" said Meng Da despairingly. The gates were closed and barred.

Meanwhile the wounded general, Xu Huang, had been borne to his tent, where the arrow head was extracted and the physician attended to him. But that night, he died. He was fifty-nine. His body was sent to Luoyang for burial.

Next day, when Meng Da went up on the wall, he saw the city was entirely surrounded as with a girdle of iron. He was greatly perturbed and could not decide what to do. Presently, he saw two bodies of troops coming up, their banners bearing the names of his fellow conspirators: Shen Yi and Shen Dan. He could only conclude that they had come to his help, so he opened the gates to them and went out to join them in the fight.

"Rebel, stay!" cried they both as they came up.

Realizing that they had been false, he turned and galloped toward the city, but a flight of arrows met him, and the two who had betrayed him, Li Gu and Deng Xian, began to revile him.

"We have already yielded the city!" they cried.

Then Meng Da fled. But he was pursued, and as he and his horse were both exhausted, he was speedily overtaken and slain. They exposed his

head, and his soldiers submitted. Sima Yi was welcomed at the open gates. The people were pacified, the soldiers were rewarded, and, this done, a report of their success was sent to Cao Rui.

Cao Rui ordered the body of Meng Da to be exposed in the marketplace of Luoyang, and he promoted Shen Yi and Shen Dan and gave them posts in the army of Sima Yi. He gave Li Gu and Deng Xian command of the cities of Xincheng and Shangyong.

Then Sima Yi marched to Changan and camped. The leader entered the city to have audience with his master, by whom he was most graciously received.

“Once, I doubted you,” said Cao Rui, “but then I did not understand, and I listened to mischief-makers. I regret it. Had you not suppressed Meng Da, both capitals would have gone wrong.”

Sima Yi replied, “Shen Yi gave the information of the intended revolt and thought to memorialize Your Majesty. But there would have been a long delay, and so I did not await orders but set forth at once. Delay would have played into Zhuge Liang’s hands.”

Then Sima Yi handed in Zhuge Liang’s letter to Meng Da.

When the Emperor had read that, he said, “You are wiser than both the great strategists of old, Wu Qi and Sun Zi.”

The Ruler of Wei conferred upon the successful leader a pair of golden axes and the privilege of taking action in important matters without first obtaining his master’s sanction. Then Sima Yi was ordered to lead the army to the pass against the enemy.

Sima Yi said, “May I name the Leader of the Van?”

“Whom do you nominate?”

“Zhang He, General of the Right Army, can shoulder this task.”

“Just the man I wished to send,” said Cao Rui, smiling. And Zhang He was appointed.

Sima Yi took his army off Changan and marched it to the camp of the Shu army.

By strategy the leader shows his skill;
He needs bold fighting men to work his will.

The result of the campaign will appear in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXII

CHAPTER 95

MA SU'S DISOBEDIENCE CAUSES THE LOSS OF JIETING; ZHUGE LIANG'S
LUTE REPULSES THE ARMY OF SIMA YI.

Beside sending Zhang He as Van Leader of Sima Yi, Cao Rui appointed two other generals, Xin Pi and Sun Li, to assist Cao Zhen. Xin Pi and Sun Li led fifty thousand troops.

Sima Yi's army was two hundred thousand strong. They marched out through the pass and made a camp.

When encamped, Sima Yi summoned Zhang He to his tent and admonished him, saying, "A characteristic of Zhuge Liang is his most diligent carefulness; he is never hasty. If I were in his place, I should advance through the Ziwu Valley to capture Changan and so save much time. It is not that he is unskillful, but he fears lest that plan might miscarry, and he will not sport with risk. Therefore, he will certainly come through the Xie Valley, taking Meicheng on the way. That place captured, he will divide his force into two, one part to take Ji Valley. I have sent Cao Zhen orders to guard Meicheng strictly and on no account to let its garrison go out to battle. The generals Sun Li and Xin Pi are to command the Ji Valley entrance, and should the enemy come, they are to make a sudden attack."

"By what road will you advance?" asked Zhang He.

"I know a road west of Qinling Mountains called Jieting, on which stands the city Liliu. These two places are the throat of Hanzhong. Zhuge Liang will take advantage of the unpreparedness of Cao Zhen and will certainly come in by this way. You and I will go to Jieting, whence it is a

short distance to Yangping Pass. When Zhuge Liang hears that the road through JiETING is blocked and his supplies cut off, he will know that all the lands of the West Valley Land are impossible to keep, and will retire without losing a moment into Hanzhong. I shall smite him on the march, and I ought to gain a complete victory. If he should not retire, then I shall block all the smaller roads and so stop his supplies. A month's starvation will kill off the soldiers of Shu, and Zhuge Liang will be my prisoner."

Zhang He took in the scheme and expressed his admiration, saying, "O Commander, your calculation exceeds humanity!"

Sima Yi continued, "However, it is not to be forgotten that Zhuge Liang is quite different from Meng Da. You, as Leader of the Van, will have to advance with the utmost care. You must impress upon your generals the importance of reconnoitering a long way ahead and only advancing when they are sure there is no ambush. The least remissness will make you the victim of some ruse of the enemy."

Zhang He, having received his instructions, marched away.

Meanwhile, spies had come to Zhuge Liang in Qishan with news of the destruction of Meng Da and the failure of his conspiracy.

They said, "Sima Yi marched rapidly in eight days to Xincheng. He had Shen Yi, Shen Dan, Li Gu, and Deng Xian plot against Meng Da from within. Meng Da had not been able to do anything and was killed. Now Sima Yi has gone to Changan, whence he has marched through the pass with Zhang He."

Zhuge Liang was distressed.

“Meng Da’s destruction was certain,” said he. “Such a scheme could not remain secret. Now Sima Yi will try for Jieting and block the one road essential to us.”

So Jieting had to be defended, and Zhuge Liang asked who would go. Ma Su offered himself instantly.

Zhuce Liang urged upon him the importance of his task.

“The place is small, but of very great importance, for its loss would involve the loss of the whole army. You are deeply read in all the rules of strategy, but the defense of this place is difficult, since it has no wall and no natural defenses.”

“I have studied the books of war since I was a boy, and I may say I know a little of the art of war,” Ma Su replied. “Why alone is Jieting so difficult to hold?”

“Because Sima Yi is an exceptional man, and also he has a famous second in Zhang He as Leader of the Van. I fear you may not be a match for him.”

Ma Su replied, “To say nothing of these two, I would not mind if Cao Rui himself came against me. If I fail, then I beg you to behead my whole family.”

“There is no jesting in war,” said Zhuge Liang.

“I will give a written pledge.”

Zhuce Liang agreed, and a written pledge was given and placed on record.

Zhuce Liang continued, “I shall give you twenty-five thousand veterans and also send an officer of rank to assist you.”

Next, he summoned Wang Ping and said to him, “As you are a careful and cautious man, I am giving you a very responsible position. You are to

hold Jieting with the utmost tenacity. Camp there in the most commanding position so that the enemy cannot steal by. When your arrangements are complete, draw a plan of them and a map of the local topography, and let me see it. All my dispositions have been carefully thought out and are not to be changed. If you can hold this successfully, it will be of the first service in the capture of Changan. So be very, very careful.”

After Ma Su and Wang Ping had gone and Zhuge Liang had reflected for a long time, it occurred to him that there might be some slip between his two leaders.

So he called Gao Xiang to him and said, “Northeast of Jieting is a city named Liliu, and near it an unfrequented hill path. There, you are to camp and make a stockade. I will give you ten thousand troops for this task. If Jieting should be threatened, you may go to the rescue.”

After Gao Xiang had left, and as Zhuge Liang thought Gao Xiang was not a match for his opponent Zhang He, he decided there ought to be additional strength on the west in order to make Jieting safe. So he summoned Wei Yan and bade him lead his army to the rear of Jieting and camp there.

But Wei Yan said, “As Leader of the Van, I should go first against the enemy. Why am I sent to a place where there is no fighting?”

“The leadership of the van is really a second-rate task. Now I am sending you to support Jieting and take post on the most dangerous road to Yangping Pass. You are the chief keeper of the throat of Hanzhong. It is a very responsible post and not at all an idle one. Do not so regard it and spoil my whole plan. Be particularly careful.”

Wei Yan, satisfied now that he was given this important mission, marched off.

Zhuge Liang's mind was at rest, and he called up Zhao Yun and Deng Zhi, to whom he said, "Now that Sima Yi is in command of the army, the whole outlook is different. Each of you will lead a force out to Ji Valley and move about so as to mislead the enemy. Whether you meet and engage them or not, you will certainly cause them uneasiness. I am going to lead the main army through the Xie Valley to Meicheng. If I can capture that, Changan will fall."

Zhao Yun and Deng Zhi took the orders and went off.

Zhuge Liang appointed Jiang Wei as Leader of the Van, and they marched to the Xie Valley.

When Ma Su and Wang Ping had reached Jieting and saw what manner of place it was, Ma Su smiled, saying, "Why was the Prime Minister so extremely anxious? How would the Wei armies dare to come to such a hilly place as this?"

Wang Ping replied, "Though they might not dare to come, we should set our camp at this meeting of many roads."

So Wang Ping ordered his soldiers to fell trees and build a strong stockade as for a permanent stay.

But Ma Su had a different idea. "What sort of a place is a road to make a camp in? Here is a hill standing solitary and well-wooded. It is a Heaven-created point of vantage, and we will camp on it."

"You are wrong, Counselor," replied Wang Ping. "If we camp on the road and build a strong wall, the enemy cannot possibly get past. If we abandon this for the hill, and the troops of Wei come in force, we shall be surrounded, and how, then, be safe?"

“You look at the thing like a child,” said Ma Su, laughing. “The rules of war say that when one looks down from a superior position, one can overcome the enemy as easily as cleaving bamboo. If they come, I will see to it that not a breastplate ever goes back again.”

“I have followed our Commander-in-Chief in many campaigns, and always has he explained in detail about the topography and given out well-thought orders. Now I have studied this hill carefully, and it is a critical spot. If we camp thereon and the enemy cut off our water supply, we shall have a mutiny.”

“No such thing!” said Ma Su. “Sun Zi says that victory lies in desperate positions. If they cut off our water, will not our soldiers be desperate and fight to the death? Then every one of them will be worth a hundred. I have studied the books, and the Prime Minister has always asked my advice. Why do you presume to oppose me?”

“If you are determined to camp on the hill, then give me part of the force to camp there on the west so that I can support you in case the enemy come.”

But Ma Su refused. Just then, a lot of the inhabitants of the hills came running along saying that the Wei soldiers had come.

Wang Ping was still bent on going his own way, and so Ma Su said to him, “Since you will not obey me, I will give you five thousand troops and you can go and make your own camp. But when I report my success to the Prime Minister, you shall have no share of the merit.”

Wang Ping marched about three miles from the hill and made his camp. He drew a plan of the place and sent it quickly to Zhuge Liang with a report that Ma Su had camped on the hill.

While Sima Yi was marching toward Jieting, he sent his younger son to reconnoiter the road and to find out whether it had a garrison.

Said Sima Yi, "If there is a garrison, do not advance further."

Sima Zhao returned to report, "Jieting has already been occupied by Shu."

"Zhuge Liang is rather more than human," said his father regretfully when Sima Zhao gave in his report. "He is too much for me."

"Why are you despondent, Father? I think Jieting is not so difficult to take."

"How dare you utter such bold words?"

"Because I have seen: there is no camp on the road, but the enemy are camped on the hill."

This was glad news. "If they are on the hill, then Heaven means a victory for me," said his father.

At night, Sima Yi changed into another dress, took a small escort, and rode out to see for himself. The moon shone brilliantly, and he rode to the hill whereon was the camp and looked all round it, thoroughly reconnoitering the neighborhood. Ma Su saw him but only laughed.

"If Sima Yi has any luck, he will not try to surround this hill," said he.

Ma Su issued an order to his generals: "In case the enemy come, you are to look to the summit for a signal with a red flag, when you shall rush down on all sides."

Sima Yi returned to his camp and sent out to inquire who commanded in Jieting.

They told him, "He is Ma Su, brother of Ma Liang."

"A man of false reputation and very ordinary ability," said Sima Yi. "If Zhuge Liang uses such as Ma Su, he will fail."

Then he asked, "Are there any other camps near the place?"

And they reported, "Wang Ping's camp is about three miles off."

Wherefore, Zhang He was ordered to go and check Wang Ping from coming to rescue. Zhang He marched out and placed himself between Wang Ping and the hill.

This done, Sima Yi ordered Shen Yi and Shen Dan to surround the hill and to block the road to the water supply. Lack of water would cause a mutiny, and when that occurred, it would be time to attack.

Then Sima Yi led the main body to attack the hill on all sides.

From the summit of his hill, Ma Su could see the banners of his enemy all round, and the country about was full of soldiers. Presently, the hemming-in was complete, and the soldiers of Shu became dejected. They dared not descend to attack although Ma Su hoisted the red flag signaling for them to move. The generals stood huddled together, no one daring to go first. Ma Su was furious. He cut down two generals, which frightened the others to the point of descending and making one desperate rush. But the troops of Wei would stand firm against their attack, and they reascended the hill.

Ma Su saw that matters were going ill, so he issued orders to bar the gates and defend till help should come from outside.

When Wang Ping saw the hill surrounded, he started to go to the rescue, but Zhang He checked him, and after exchanging some ten encounters, Wang Ping was compelled to retire whence he had come.

The Wei troops kept a close siege. The Shu soldiers in the hill camp, having no water, were unable to prepare food, and disorder broke out. The shouting was audible at the foot of the hill and went on far into the night. The soldiers on the south side got out of hand, opened the gates, and

surrendered. The men of Wei went round the hill, setting fire to the wood, which led to still greater confusion in the beleaguered garrison. At last, Ma Su decided to make a dash for safety toward the west.

Sima Yi allowed him to pass, but Zhang He was sent to pursue and chased him for ten miles. But then there came an unexpected roll of drums. Zhang He was stopped by Wei Yan while Ma Su got past. Whirling up his sword, Wei Yan dashed toward Zhang He, who retired within his ranks and fled. Wei Yan followed and drove Zhang He backward toward Jieting.

The pursuit continued for fifteen miles, and then Wei Yan found himself in an ambush, Sima Yi on one side and Sima Zhao on the other. They went around the hill and closed in behind Wei Yan, and he was surrounded. Zhang He then turned back, and the attack was now on three sides. Wei Yan lost many troops, and all his efforts failed to get him clear of the press. Then, help appeared in the person of Wang Ping.

“This is life for me!” said Wei Yan as he saw Wang Ping coming up, and the two forces joined in a new attack on the force of Wei. So the troops of Wei drew off, while Wei Yan and Wang Ping made all haste back to their own camp in Jieting...only to find it in the hands of the enemy.

Shen Yi and Shen Dan then rushed out and drove Wei Yan and Wang Ping to Liliu.

About that time, Gao Xiang got news of the attack on Jieting, and he marched out his army from Liliu to the rescue. But halfway, he fell in with Wei Yan and Wang Ping.

When Gao Xiang heard their story, he at once proposed a night attack on the Wei camp and the recovery of Jieting. They talked this over on the

hillside and arranged their plans, after which they set themselves to wait till it was dark enough to start.

They set out along three roads. Wei Yan was the first to reach Jieting. Not a soldier was visible, which looked suspicious. He decided to await the arrival of Gao Xiang, and they both speculated as to the whereabouts of their enemy. They could find no trace, and the third army under Wang Ping had not yet come up.

Suddenly, a bomb exploded, and a brilliant flash lit up the sky; drums rolled as though the earth was rending, and the enemy appeared. In a trice, the armies of Shu found themselves hemmed in. Both Wei Yan and Gao Xiang pushed here and shoved there but could find no way out. Then, most opportunely, from behind a hill rolled out a thunder of drums, and there was Wang Ping coming to their rescue. Then the three forced their way to Liliu. But just as they drew near to the city, another body of soldiers came up, which, from the writing on their flags, they read, “Wei Commander Guo Huai.”

Now Guo Huai had talked over Sima Yi’s recall with his colleague Cao Zhen, and, fearing lest the recalled general should acquire too great glory, Guo Huai had set out to anticipate him in the capture of Jieting. Disappointed when he heard of Sima Yi’s success there, he had decided to try a similar exploit at Liliu. So he had diverted his march thither.

He engaged the three Shu armies at once and slew many of them. Wei Yan feared the Wei army might pour into Hanzhong, so Wang Ping, Gao Xiang, and Wei Yan rushed to Yangping Pass and mustered its defense.

Guo Huai, pleased with his success, gathered in his army after the victory and said to his officers, “I was disappointed at Jieting, but we have taken this place, and that is merit of high order.”

Thereupon, he proceeded to the city gates. Just as he arrived, a bomb exploded on the wall, and, looking up, he saw the rampart bedecked with flags. On the largest banner he read the characters, "Sima Yi, General Who Pacifies the West." At that moment, Sima Yi himself lifted a board that hung in front of him and looked over the breast-high rail.

He looked down and smiled, saying, "How late you are, friend Guo Huai!"

Guo Huai was amazed. "He is too much for me," said he.

So Guo Huai resignedly entered the city and went to pay his respects to his successful rival.

Sima Yi was gracious, and said, "Zhuge Liang must retire, now that Jieting is lost. You join forces with Cao Zhen and follow up quickly."

Guo Huai agreed and took his leave.

Sima Yi called to him Zhang He and said, "Cao Zhen and Guo Huai thought we should win too great merit, so they tried to get ahead of us here. We are not the only ones who desire to achieve good service and acquire merit, but we had the good fortune to succeed. I thought Wei Yan, Ma Su, Wang Ping, and Gao Xiang would first try to occupy Yangping Pass. If I went to take it, then Zhuge Liang would fall on our rear. It says in the books on war that one should crush a retreating enemy, not pursue broken rebels. So you may go along the byroads and smite those withdrawing down the Ji Valley, while I oppose the Xie Valley army. If they flee, do not press them too much, but just hold them up on the road and capture the baggage train."

Zhang He marched away with half the force to carry out his part of this plan.

Then Sima Yi gave orders: "We are going to the Xie Valley by way of Xicheng. Though Xicheng is a small place, it is important as a depot of

stores for the Shu army, beside commanding the road to the three counties of Nanan, Tianshui, and Anding. If this place can be captured, the other three can be recaptured.”

Sima Yi left Shen Yi and Shen Dan to guard Liliu and marched his army toward the Xie Valley.

After Zhuge Liang had sent Ma Su to guard Jieting, his mind was constantly disturbed. Then arrived the messenger with the topography and plan prepared by Wang Ping. Zhuge Liang went over to his table and opened the letter. As he read it, he smote the table in wrath.

“Ma Su’s foolishness has destroyed the army!” he cried.

“Why are you so disturbed, O Prime Minister?” asked those near.

“By this plan I see that we have lost command of an important road. The camp has been made on the hill. If the Wei army come in force, our army will be surrounded and their water supply interrupted. In two days, the soldiers will be in a state of mutiny. If Jieting shall be lost, how shall we be able to retire?”

Here, High Counselor Yang Yi said, “I am none too clever I know, but let me go to replace Ma Su.”

Zhugge Liang explained to Yang Yi how and where to camp, but before he could start, a horseman brought the news of the loss of Jieting and Liliu.

This made Zhuge Liang very sad, and he sighed, saying, “The whole scheme has come to nought, and it is my fault.”

Zhugge Liang sent for Guan Xing and Zhang Bao and said, “Each of you take three thousand of good soldiers and go along the road to Wugong

Hills. If you fall in with the enemy, do not fight, but beat drums and raise a hubbub and make them hesitate and be doubtful so that they may retire. Do not pursue, but when they retire, make for Yangping Pass.”

He also sent Zhang Yi to put Saber Pass in order for retreat and issued instructions for making ready to march. Ma Dai and Jiang Wei were told to guard the rear, but they were to go into ambush in the valleys till the whole army would have retreated. Trusty messengers were sent with the news to Tianshui, Nanan, and Anding that the officers, army, and people might go away into Hanzhong. He also sent to remove to a place of safety in Hanzhong the aged mother of Jiang Wei.

All these arrangements made, Zhuge Liang took five thousand troops and set out for Xicheng to remove the stores.

But messenger after messenger, more than ten of them, came to report: “Sima Yi is advancing rapidly on Xicheng with an army of one hundred fifty thousand troops.”

No leader of rank was left to Zhuge Liang. He had only the civil officials and the five thousand soldiers, and as half this force had started to remove the stores, he had only two thousand five hundred left.

His officers were all frightened at the news of near approach of the enemy. Zhuge Liang himself went up on the rampart to look around. He saw clouds of dust rising into the sky. The Wei armies were nearing Xicheng along two roads.

Then he gave orders: “All the banners are to be removed and concealed. If any officer in command of soldiers in the city moves or makes any noise, he will be instantly put to death.”

Next, he threw open all the gates and set twenty soldiers dressed as ordinary people cleaning the streets at each gate. He told them not to react

at the coming of the Wei army, as he had a plan ready for the city defense.

When all these preparations were complete, he donned the simple Daoist dress and, attended by a couple of lads, sat down on the wall by one of the towers with his lute before him and a stick of incense burning.

Sima Yi's scouts came near the city gate and saw all this. They did not enter the city, but went back and reported what they had seen. Sima Yi smiled incredulously. But he halted his army and rode ahead himself. Lo! It was exactly as the scouts had reported: Zhuge Liang sat there, his face with all smiles as he played the lute. A lad stood on one side of him bearing a treasured sword and on the other a boy with the ordinary symbol of authority, a yak's tail. Just inside the gates a score of persons with their heads down were sweeping as if no one was about.

Sima Yi hardly believed his eyes and thought this meant some peculiarly subtle ruse. So he went back to his armies, faced them about, and moved toward the hills on the north.

"I am certain there are no soldiers behind this foolery," said Sima Zhao. "What do you retire for, Father?"

Sima Yi replied, "Zhuge Liang is always most careful and runs no risks. Those open gates undoubtedly mean an ambush. If our force enter the city, they will fall victims to his guile. How can you know? No, our course is to retire."

Thus were the two armies turned back from the city, much to the joy of Zhuge Liang, who laughed and clapped his hands as he saw them hastening away.

The officials gasped with astonishment, and they asked, "Sima Yi is a famous general of Wei, and he was leading one hundred fifty thousand

troops. By what reason did he march off at the sight of you, O Prime Minister?”

Zhuge Liang said, “He knows my reputation for carefulness and that I play not with danger. Seeing things as they were made him suspect an ambush, and so he turned away. I do not run risks, but this time there was no help for it. Now he will meet with Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, whom I sent away into the hills to wait for him.”

They were still in the grip of fear, but they praised the depth of insight of their chief and his mysterious schemes and unfathomable plans.

“We should simply have run away,” said they.

“What could we have done with two thousand five hundred soldiers even if we had run? We would not have gone far before being caught,” said Zhuge Liang.



Quite open lay the city to the foe,
But Zhuge Liang's lute of jasper wonders wrought;
It turned aside the legions' onward march
For both the leaders guessed the other's thought.



“But if I had been in Sima Yi's place, I should not have turned away,” said Zhuge Liang, smiling and clapping his hands.

He gave orders that the people of the place should follow the army into Hanzhong, for Sima Yi would assuredly return.

They abandoned Xicheng and returned into Hanzhong. In due course, the officials and soldiers and people out of the three counties also came in.

It has been said that Sima Yi turned aside from the city. He went to Wugong Hills. Presently, there came the sounds of a Shu army from behind the hills.

Sima Yi turned to his sons, saying, "If we do not retire, we shall yet somehow fall victims to this Zhuge Liang."

Then appeared a force advancing rapidly, the main banner displaying, "Tiger General of the Right Guard, Zhang Bao." The soldiers of Wei were seized with sudden panic and ran, flinging off their armors and throwing away their weapons. But before they had fled very far, they heard other terrible sounds in the valley and soon saw another force, with the main banner, "Dragon General of the Left Guard, Guan Xing." The roar of armed troops echoing up and down the valley was terrifying. As no one could tell how many men there were bearing down on them, the panic increased. The Wei army abandoned all the baggage and took to flight. But having orders not to pursue, Zhang Bao and Guan Xing let their enemies run in peace, while they gathered up the spoils. Then they returned.

Seeing the valley apparently full of Shu soldiers, Sima Yi dared not march by the main road. He hurried back to Jieting.

At this time, Cao Zhen, hearing that the army of Shu was retreating, went in pursuit. But at a certain point, he encountered a strong force under Ma Dai and Jiang Wei. Valleys and hills seemed to swarm with enemies, and Cao

Zhen became alarmed. Then Chen Zao, his Van Leader, was slain by Ma Dai, and the soldiers were panic-stricken and fled in disorder. And the soldiers of Shu were hastening night and day along the road into Hanzhong.

Zhao Yun and Deng Zhi, who had been lying in ambush in Ji Valley, heard that their comrades were retreating.

Then, said Zhao Yun, "The army of Wei will surely come to smite us while we are retreating. Wherefore, let me first take up a position in their rear, and then you lead off your troops and part of mine, showing my ensigns. I will follow, keeping at the same distance behind you, and thus I shall be able to protect the retreat."

Now Guo Huai was leading his army through the Ji Valley.

He called up his Van Leader, Su Yong, and said to him, "Zhao Yun is a warrior whom no one can withstand. You must keep a most careful guard lest you fall into some trap while they are retreating."

Su Yong replied, smiling, "If you will help me, O Commander, we shall be able to capture this Zhao Yun."

So Su Yong, with three thousand troops, hastened on ahead and entered the valley in the wake of the Shu army. He saw upon a slope in the distance a large, red banner bearing the name, "Zhao Yun of Changshan." This frightened him, and he retired.

But before he had gone far, a great uproar arose about him, and a mighty warrior came bounding forth on a swift steed, crying, "Do you recognize Zhao Yun?"

Su Yong was terrified. "Whence came you?" he cried. "Is there another Zhao Yun here?"

But Su Yong could make no stand and soon fell victim to the spear of the veteran. His troops scattered, and Zhao Yun marched on after the main body.

But soon another company came in pursuit, this time led by a general of Guo Huai named Wan Zheng. As they came along, Zhao Yun halted in the middle of the road to wait for the enemy. By the time Wan Zheng had come close, the other Shu soldiers had gone about ten miles along the road. However, when Wan Zheng drew nearer still and saw who it was standing in his path, he hesitated and finally halted. Zhao Yun guarded the road until the sunset, when he turned back and retired slowly.

Guo Huai and his army came up and met Wan Zheng, who said, "Zhao Yun is as terrible as ever. He guards the rear carefully, and I dare not be reckless."

However, Guo Huai was not content and ordered Wan Zheng to return to the pursuit of the retreating army. This time Wan Zheng led a company of several hundred horsemen.

Presently, they came to a wood, and, as they entered, a loud shout arose in the rear, "Zhao Yun is here!"

Terror seized upon the pursuers, and many fell from their horses. The others scattered among the hills. Wan Zheng braced himself for the encounter and went on. Zhao Yun shot an arrow which struck the plume on his helmet. Startled, Wan Zheng tumbled into a water stream.

Then Zhao Yun pointed his spear at him and said, "Be off! I will not kill you. Go and tell Guo Huai to come quickly, if he is coming."

Wan Zheng fled for his life, while Zhao Yun continued his march as rear guard, and the retreat into Hanzhong steadily continued. There were no other episodes along the way.

Cao Zhen and Guo Huai took to themselves all the credit of having recovered the three counties: Nanan, Tianshui, and Anding.

Before the cautious Sima Yi was ready to pursue the army of Shu, it had already reached Hanzhong. He took a troop of horsemen and rode to Xicheng and there heard, from the few people who had formerly sought refuge in the hills and now returned, that Zhuge Liang really had had no men in the city, with the exception of the two thousand five hundred soldiers, that he had had not a single military commander but only a few civil officers. Sima Yi also heard that Guan Xing and Zhang Bao had had only a few troops whom they led about among the hills, making as much noise as they could.

Sima Yi felt sad at having been tricked.

“Zhuge Liang is a cleverer man than I am,” said he with a sigh of resignation.

He set about restoring order, and presently marched back to Changan.

He saw the Ruler of Wei, who was pleased with his success and said, “It is by your good service that all counties of the West Valley Land are again mine.”

Sima Yi replied, “But the army of Shu is in Hanzhong, undestroyed. Therefore, I pray for authority to go against them that you may recover the West River Land also.”

Cao Rui rejoiced and approved, and authorized the raising of an army.

But then, one of the courtiers suddenly said, “Your servant can propose a plan by which Shu will be overcome and Wu submit.”

The generals lead their beaten soldiers home;
The victors plan new deeds for days to come.

Who offered this plan? Succeeding chapters will tell.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXII

CHAPTER 96

SHEDDING TEARS, ZHUGE LIANG PUTS MA SU TO DEATH; CUTTING
HAIR, ZHOU FANG BEGUILLES CAO XIU.

The proposer of the great plan that was to conquer the empire was the Chairman of the Secretariat, named Sun Zu.

“Noble Sir, expound your excellent scheme,” said the Ruler of Wei.

And Sun Zu said, “When your great progenitor, Emperor Cao, first got Zhang Lu, he was at a critical stage in his career, but thenceforward all went well. He used to say the land of Nanzheng is really a natural hell. In the Xie Valley there are one hundred fifty miles of rocks and caves, so that it is an impossible country for an army. If Wei be denuded of soldiers in order to conquer Shu, then for sure we shall be invaded by Wu on the east. My advice is to divide the army among the various generals and appoint each a place of strategic value to hold, and let them train their forces. In a few years, the Middle Land will be prosperous and wealthy, while the other two, Shu and Wu, will have been reduced by mutual quarrels and will fall an easy prey. I hope Your Majesty will consider whether this is not a superior plan.”

“What does the General think?” said Cao Rui to Sima Yi.

He replied, “Chairman Sun Zu says well.”

So Cao Rui bade Sima Yi draw up a scheme of defense and station the soldiers, leaving Guo Huai and Zhang He to guard Changan. And having rewarded the army, the Ruler of Wei returned to Luoyang.

When Zhuge Liang got back to Hanzhong and missed Zhao Yun and Deng Zhi, the only two generals who had not arrived, he was sad at heart and bade Guan Xing and Zhang Bao go back to afford them assistance. However, before the reinforcing parties could leave, the missing men arrived. Furthermore, they came with their army in excellent condition and not a man short, nor a horse nor any of their equipment.

As they drew near, Zhuge Liang went out of the city to welcome them.

Thereupon, Zhao Yun hastily dismounted and bowed to the earth, saying, "The Prime Minister should not have come forth to welcome a defeated general."

But Zhuge Liang lifted him up and took his hand and said, "Mine was the fault. Mine were the ignorance and unwisdom that caused all this. But how is it that, amid all the defeat and loss, you have come through unscathed?"

And Deng Zhi replied, "It was because friend Zhao Yun sent me ahead, while he guarded the rear and warded off every attack. One leader he slew, and this frightened the others. Thus, nothing was lost or left by the way."

"A really great general!" said Zhuge Liang.

He sent Zhao Yun a gift of fifty ounces of gold and, to his army, ten thousand rolls of silk.

But these were returned as Zhao Yun said, "All armies have accomplished nothing, and that is also our fault. The rules for reward and punishment must be strictly kept. I pray that these things be kept in store till the winter, when they can be distributed among the army."

“When the First Ruler lived, he never tired of extolling Zhao Yun’s virtues. The First Ruler was perfectly right,” said Zhuge Liang.

And his respect for the veteran was doubled.

Then came the turn of the four unfortunate leaders Ma Su, Wang Ping, Wei Yan, and Gao Xiang to render account. Wang Ping was called to the Commander-in-Chief’s tent and rebuked.

“I ordered you and Ma Su to guard Jieting. Why did you not remonstrate with him and prevent this great loss?”

“I did remonstrate many times. I wished to build a rampart down in the road and construct a solid camp, but the Counselor would not agree and showed ill temper. So I led five thousand troops and camped some three miles off. When the army of Wei came in crowds and surrounded my colleague, I led my army to attack them a score times. But I could not penetrate, and the catastrophe came quickly. Many of our troops surrendered, and mine were too few to stand. Wherefore I went to friend Wei Yan for help. Then we were intercepted and imprisoned in a valley and only got out by fighting most desperately. We got back to my camp to find the enemy in possession, and so we set out for Liliu. On the road, I met Gao Xiang, and we three tried to raid the enemy’s camp, hoping to recover Jieting. But as there was not one soldier there, I grew suspicious. From a hill, I saw Wei Yan and Gao Xiang had been hemmed in by the soldiers of Wei, so I went to rescue them. Thence, we hastened to Yangping Pass to try to prevent that from falling.

“It was not that I failed to remonstrate. And you, O Prime Minister, can get confirmation of my words from any of the officers.”

Zhuge Liang bade him retire, and sent for Ma Su. He came, bound himself, and threw himself on the earth at the tent door.

Zhuge Liang got angry, saying, "You have filled yourself with the study of the books on war ever since you were a boy. You know them thoroughly. I enjoined upon you that Jieting was most important, and you pledged yourself and all your family to do your best in the enterprise. Yet you would not listen to Wang Ping, and thus you caused this misfortune. The army is defeated, generals have been slain and cities and territory lost, all through you. If I do not make you an example and vindicate the law, how shall I maintain a proper state of discipline? You have offended, and you must pay the penalty.

"After your death, the little ones of your family shall be my care, and I will see that they get a monthly allowance. Do not let their fate cause you anxiety."

Zhuge Liang told the executioners to take Ma Su away.

Ma Su wept bitterly, saying, "Pity me, O Prime Minister! You have looked upon me as a son; I have looked up to you as a father. I know my fault is worthy of death, but I pray you remember how King Shun employed Yu, after executing Yu's father. Though I die, I will harbor no resentment down in the depths of the Nine Golden Springs."

Zhuge Liang brushed aside his tears and said, "We have been as brothers, and your children shall be as my own. I know what to do."

They led the doomed man away. Without the main gate, just as they were going to deal the fatal blow, High Counselor Jiang Wan, who had just arrived from Capital Chengdu, was passing in. He bade the executioners wait a while, and he went in and interceded for Ma Su.

"Formerly, the King of Chu put Minister Cheng Dechen to death due to a defeat, and his rival Duke Wen of Jin rejoiced. There is great confusion in the land, and yet you would slay a man of admitted ability. Can you not spare him?"

Zhuge Liang's tears fell, but he said, "Sun Zi maintains that the one way to obtain success is to make the law supreme. Now, confusion and actual war are in every quarter. If the law be not observed, how may rebels be made away with? He must die."

Soon after, they bore in the head of Ma Su as proof, and Zhuge Liang wailed bitterly.

"Why do you weep for him now that he has met the just penalty for his fault?" said Jiang Wan.

"I was not weeping then because of Ma Su, but because I remembered the words of the First Ruler. At his last moment in Baidicheng, he said: 'Ma Su's words exceed his deeds. Do not make much use of him.' It has come true, and I greatly regret my want of insight. That is why I weep."

Every officer wept. Ma Su was but thirty-nine, and he met his end in the fifth month of the sixth year of Beginning Prosperity (AS 228).



A poet wrote about him thus:

That was pitiful that he who talked so glib
Of war, should lose a city, fault most grave,
With death as expiation. At the gate
He paid stern law's extremest penalty.
Deep grieved, his chief recalled the late Prince's
words.



The head of Ma Su was paraded round the camps. Then it was sewn again to the body and buried with it. Zhuge Liang conducted the sacrifices for the dead and read the oration. A monthly allowance was made for the family, and they were consoled as much as possible.

Next, Zhuge Liang made his memorial to the Throne and bade Jiang Wan bear it to the Latter Ruler. Therein, Zhuge Liang proposed his own degradation from his high office.

“Naturally a man of mediocre abilities, I have enjoyed your confidence undeservedly. Having led out an expedition, I have proved my inability to perform the high office of leader. Over-solicitude was my undoing. Hence happened disobedience at Jieting and the failure to guard the Ji Valley. The fault is mine in that I erred in the use of officers. In my anxiety, I was too secretive. The ‘Spring and Autumn’ philosophy has pronounced the commander such as I am is blameworthy, and whither may I flee from my fault? I pray that I may be degraded three degrees as punishment. I cannot express my mortification. I humbly await your command.”

“Why does the Prime Minister speak thus?” said the Latter Ruler after reading the memorial. “It is but the ordinary fortune of war.”

Court Counselor Fei Yi said, “The ruler must enhance the majesty of the law, for without law, how can people support him? It is right that the Prime Minister should be degraded in rank.”

Thereupon, an edict was issued reducing Zhuge Liang to the rank of General of the Right Army, but retaining him in the same position in the direction of state affairs and command of the military forces. Fei Yi was directed to communicate the decision.

Fei Yi bore the edict into Hanzhong and gave it to Zhuge Liang, who bowed to the decree. The envoy thought Zhuge Liang might be mortified, so he ventured to felicitate him in other matters.

“It was a great joy to the people of Shu when you, O Prime Minister, captured the four northwest counties,” said he.

“What sort of language is this?” said Zhuge Liang, annoyed. “Success followed by failure is no success. It shames me indeed to hear such a compliment.”

“His Majesty will be very pleased to hear of the acquisition of Jiang Wei.”

This remark also angered Zhuge Liang, who replied, “It is my fault that a defeated army has returned without any gain of territory. What injury to Wei was the loss of Jiang Wei?”

Fei Yi tried again, saying, “But with an army of one hundred thousand bold veterans, you can attack Wei again.”

Said Zhuge Liang, “When we were at Qishan and Ji Valley, we outnumbered the enemy, but we could not conquer them. On the contrary, they beat us. The defect was not in the number of soldiers but in the leadership. Now, we must reduce the army, discover our faults, reflect on our errors, and mend our ways against the future. Unless this is so, what is the use of a numerous army? Hereafter, everyone will have to look to the future of his country. But most diligently each of you must fight against my shortcomings and blame my inefficiencies. Then we may succeed, rebellion can be exterminated, and merit can be set up.”

Fei Yi and the officers acknowledged the aptness of these remarks. Fei Yi went back to the capital, leaving Zhuge Liang in Hanzhong resting his soldiers and doing what he could for the people, training and heartening his

troops and turning special attention to the construction of apparatus for assaults on cities and crossing rivers. He also collected grain and fodder and built battle rafts, all for future use.

The spies of Wei got to know of these doings in the River Lands and reported to Luoyang. The Ruler of Wei called Sima Yi to council and asked how Shu might be annexed.

“Shu cannot be attacked,” was the reply. “In this present hot weather they will not come out, but, if we invade, they will only garrison and defend their strategic points, which we should find hard to overcome.”

“What shall we do if they invade us again?”

“I have prepared for that. Just now, Zhuge Liang shall imitate Han Xin, who secretly crossed the river into Chencang. I can recommend a man to guard the place by building a rampart there and rendering it absolutely secure. He is a nine-span man, round-shouldered and powerful, a good archer and prudent strategist. He would be quite equal to dealing with an invasion.”

The Ruler of Wei was very pleased and asked for his name.

“His name is Hao Zhao, and he is in command at Hexi.”

The Ruler of Wei accepted the recommendation, and an edict went forth promoting Hao Zhao to General Who Guards the West, and sending him to command in the county of Chencang.

Soon after this edict was issued, a memorial was received from Cao Xiu, Minister of War and Commander of Yangzhou, saying that Zhou Fang, the Wu Governor of Poyang, wished to tender his submission and transfer his allegiance, and had sent a man to present a memorandum under seven

headings showing how the power of the South Land could be broken and to ask that an army be dispatched soon.

Cao Rui spread the document out on the couch that he and Sima Yi might read it.

“It seems very reasonable,” said Sima Yi. “Wu could be quite destroyed. Let me go with an army to help Cao Xiu.”

But from among the courtiers stepped out Jia Kui, who said, “What this man of Wu says may be understood in two ways. Do not trust it. Zhou Fang is a wise and crafty man and very unlikely to desert. In this is some ruse to decoy our soldiers into danger.”

“Such words must also be listened to,” said Sima Yi. “Yet such a chance must not be missed.”

“You and Jia Kui might both go to the help of Cao Xiu,” said the Ruler of Wei.

Sima Yi and Jia Kui went.

A large army, led by Cao Xiu, moved to Huancheng. Jia Kui, assisted by General Man Chong and Governor Hu Zhi of Dongwan, marched to capture Yangcheng, and facing the East Pass. Sima Yi led the third army to Jiangling.

Now the Prince of Wu, Sun Quan, was at the East Pass in Wuchang, and there he assembled his officers and said, “The Governor of Poyang, Zhou Fang, has sent up a secret memorial saying that Cao Xiu intends to invade. Zhou Fang has therefore set out a trap for Cao Xiu and has drawn up a document giving seven plausible circumstances, hoping thereby to cajole

the Wei army into his power. The armies of Wei are on the move in three divisions, and I need your advice.”

Gu Yong stood forth, saying, “There is only one man fit to cope with the present need: he is Lu Xun.”

So Lu Xun was summoned and made Grand Commander, General Who Pacifies the North, Commander-in-Chief of all the State Armies, including the Imperial Guards, and Assistant in the Royal Duties. He was given the White Banners and the Golden Axes, which denoted imperial rank. All officers, civil and military, were placed under his orders. Moreover, Sun Quan personally stood beside him and held his whip while he mounted his steed.

Having received all these marks of confidence and favor, Lu Xun wanted two persons to be his assistants.

Sun Quan asked their names, and Lu Xun said, “They are Zhu Huan, General Who Fortifies Prowess, and Quan Zong, General Who Calms the South. These two should be in command.”

Sun Quan approved and appointed Zhu Huan and Quan Zong as Left Commander and Right Commander, respectively.

Then, the grand army, comprising all the forces of the eighty-one counties of the South Land and the levies of Jingzhou, seven hundred thousand troops in total, were assembled and marched out in three divisions, Lu Xun in the center, with Zhu Huan and Quan Zong supporting him left and right with the other two columns.

Then said Zhu Huan, “Cao Xiu is neither able nor bold. He holds office because he is of the blood. He has fallen into the trap laid by Zhou Fang and marched too far to be able to withdraw. If the Commander-in-Chief will smite, Cao Xiu must be defeated. Defeated, he must flee along

two roads, one Jiashi on the left, the other Guichi on the right, both of which are precipitous and narrow. Let me and my colleague go to prepare an ambush in these roads. We will block them and so cut off their escape. If this Cao Xiu could be captured, and a hasty advance made, success would be easy and sure. We should get Shouchun, whence Xuchang and Luoyang can be seen. This is the one chance in the thousand.”

“I do not think the plan good,” said Lu Xun. “I have a better one.”

Zhu Huan resented the rejection of his scheme and went away. Lu Xun ordered Zhuge Jin and certain others to garrison Jiangling and oppose Sima Yi and made all other dispositions of forces.

Cao Xiu neared Huancheng, and Zhou Fang came out of the city to welcome him and went to the general’s tent.

Cao Xiu said, “I received your letter and the memorandum, which was most logical, and sent it to His Majesty. He has set in motion accordingly three armies. It will be a great merit for you, Sir, if the South Land can be added to His Majesty’s dominions. People say you are abundant in craft, but I do not believe what they say, for I think you will be true to me and not fail.”

Zhou Fang wept. He seized a sword from one of his escort and was about to kill himself, but Cao Xiu stopped him.

Still leaning on the sword, Zhou Fang said, “As to the seven things I mentioned, my regret is that I cannot show you all. You doubt me because some persons from Wu and Wei have been poisoning your mind against me. If you heed them, the only course for me is to die. Heaven only can make manifest my loyal heart.”

Again he made to slay himself.

But Cao Xiu, in trepidation, threw his arms about him, saying, "I did not mean it. The words were uttered in jest. Why do you act thus?"

Upon this, Zhou Fang, with his sword, cut off his hair and threw it on the ground, saying, "I have dealt with you with sincerity, Sir, and you joke about it. Now I have cut off the hair, which I inherited from my parents, in order to prove my sincerity."

Then Cao Xiu doubted no more but trusted him fully and prepared a banquet for him, and when the feast was over, Zhou Fang returned to his own.

General Jia Kui came to Cao Xiu, and when asked whether there was any special reason for the visit, he said, "I have come to warn you, Commander, to be cautious and wait till you and I can attack the enemy together. The whole army of Wu is encamped at Huancheng."

"You mean you want to share in my victory," sneered Cao Xiu.

"It is said Zhou Fang cut off his hair as a pledge of sincerity. That is only another bit of deceit. According to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, Yao Li cut off his arm as a pledge of loyalty before he assassinated Prince Qingji. Mutilation is no guarantee. Do not trust Zhou Fang."

"Why do you come to utter ill-omened words just as I am opening the campaign? You destroy the spirit of the army!" said Cao Xiu.

In his wrath, he told the lictors to put Jia Kui to death.

However, the officers interceded, saying, "Before the march, killing our general is not favorable to the army. O Commander, spare him until after the expedition!"

And Jia Kui was reprieved. But he was not assigned any part in the campaign, and his troops were left in reserve. Cao Xiu himself went away

to the East Pass.

When Zhou Fang heard that Jia Kui had been broken, he rejoiced in his heart, saying, "If Cao Xiu had attended to his words, then Wu would have lost. Heaven is good to me and is giving me the means of achieving great things."

Then he sent a secret messenger to Huancheng, and Lu Xun knew that the time had come. He assembled the officers for orders.

Lu Xun said, "Shiting, lying over against us, is a hilly country fit for preparing an ambush. It will be occupied as suitable to array our army and await the coming of Wei. Xu Sheng is to be Leader of the Van, and the army will move there."

Now Cao Xiu told Zhou Fang to lead the way for his attack. While on march, Cao Xiu asked, "What is the place lying ahead?"

Zhou Fang replied, "Shiting, a suitable place to camp in."

So a great camp was made there.

But soon after, the scouts reported, "Wu soldiers, unknown in number, have camped among the hills."

Cao Xiu began to feel alarmed, saying, "Zhou Fang said there were no soldiers. Why these preparations?"

Cao Xiu hastily sought Zhou Fang to ask him, but was told, "Zhou Fang has gone away with a few dozen riders. No one knows whither."

“I have been deceived and am in a trap,” said Cao Xiu, now very repentant of his easy confidence. “However, there is nothing to fear.”

Then, he made his arrangements to march against the enemy, and when they were complete and the array drawn up, Zhang Pu, the Leader of the Van, rode out and began to rail at the men of Wu.

“Rebel leader, come and surrender!” cried Zhang Pu.

Then rode out Xu Sheng and fought with him. But Zhang Pu was no match for Xu Sheng, as was soon evident, wherefore he led his troops to retire.

“Xu Sheng is too strong,” said Zhang Pu when he saw Cao Xiu.

“Then will we defeat him by a surprise,” said Cao Xiu.

He sent Zhang Pu with twenty thousand troops to hide in the south of Shiting, while another equal party under Xue Qiao was sent north.

And Cao Xiu arranged, saying, “Tomorrow, I will lead a thousand soldiers to provoke the troops of Wu into battle, then I will feign defeat and lead them to the hills in the north, when a bomb will explode and a three-pronged ambush will bring us victory.”

On the other side, Lu Xun called his two generals, Zhu Huan and Quan Zong, and said, “Each of you is to lead thirty thousand troops and take a crosscut from Shiting to the enemy’s camp. Give a fire signal behind the camp on arrival, and then the main army will advance to the camp’s front for a double attack.”

As evening fell, these two moved out their troops, and by the middle of the second watch, both had got behind the camp of Wei. Due to darkness, Zhang Pu, Cao Xiu’s general, who was there in ambush, did not recognize that the troops who approached him were enemies, but went as to meet

friends and was at once slain by the blade of Zhu Huan. The soldiers of Wei then fled, and Zhu Huan lit his signal fires.

Quan Zong, marching up, came across the northern ambush under Xue Qiao. Quan Zong began a battle at once, and the troops of Wei were soon put to flight. Both the armies of Wu pursued, and confusion reigned in Cao Xiu's camp, troops fighting with others of their own side and slaying each other.

Cao Xiu despaired and fled toward Jiashi. Xu Sheng, with a strong force, came along the high road and attacked. And the soldiers of Wei killed were very many. Those who escaped did so by abandoning all their armors.

Cao Xiu was in straits, but he struggled along the Jiashi Road. Here came a cohort into the road from the side. It was led by Jia Kui. Cao Xiu's alarm gave place to shame on meeting Jia Kui.

"I took no notice of what you said, and so this evil came upon me," said he.

Jia Kui replied, "Commander, you should quickly get out of this road. For if the troops of Wu block it, we shall be in grave danger."

So Cao Xiu hastened, while Jia Kui protected his retreat. And Jia Kui ordered his soldiers to set flags and banners up among trees and in thickets and along bypaths, so as to give an impression of having many men posted all round. Wherefore, when Xu Sheng came in pursuit, he thought the country was full of ambushing men and dared not proceed far. So he gave up the pursuit and retired.

By these means, Cao Xiu was rescued, and finally Sima Yi withdrew his army upon the news of Cao Xiu's defeat.

In the meantime, Lu Xun was awaiting news of victory. Soon Xu Sheng, Zhu Huan, and Quan Zong came and reported their successes, and they brought great spoil of carts and bullocks, horses and mules, and military material and weapons. And they had also ten thousand prisoners. There was great rejoicing, and Lu Xun with Zhou Fang led the army home into Wu.

On their return, Sun Quan, the Prince of Wu, came out with a numerous cortege of officers to welcome the victors, and an imperial umbrella was borne over the head of Lu Xun as they wended their way homeward.

When the officers presented their felicitations, Sun Quan noticed that Zhou Fang had no hair.

Sun Quan was very gracious to him, saying, "This deed of yours, and the sacrifice you made to attain it, will surely be written in the histories."

He made Zhou Fang the Lord of the Gate Within. Then there were great feastings and greetings and much revelry.

Lu Xun said, "Cao Xiu has been thoroughly beaten, and the soldiers of Wei are cowed. I think now is an occasion to send letters into Shu to advise Zhuge Liang to attack Wei."

Sun Quan agreed, and letters were sent to the River Lands.

The east, successful in one fight,
Would unto war the west incite.

The next chapter will say if Zhuge Liang once more tried to overcome Wei.



END OF ACT XXII

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XXIII:

THE GREAT ADVISER:

ZHUGE LIANG'S FINAL NORTHERN
EXPEDITIONS

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIII

CHAPTER 97

SENDING A SECOND MEMORIAL, ZHUGE LIANG RENEWS THE ATTACK ON WEI; FORGING A LETTER, JIANG WEI DEFEATS THE NORTHERN ARMY.

It was in the autumn of the sixth year of Beginning Prosperity (AD 229) that the Wei army was defeated, with very great loss, by Lu Xun of Wu. Cao Xiu's mortification brought on an illness from which he died in Luoyang. By command of Cao Rui, the Ruler of Wei, Cao Xiu received most honorable burial.

Then Sima Yi brought the army home again.

The other officers went to welcome him and asked, "The defeat of Commander Cao Xiu is also partly yours. Why, O General, did you hurry home?"

Sima Yi replied, "I came for reasons of strategy, because of Zhuge Liang's probable intentions. If he knows I have suffered a defeat, he may try to attack Changan. The whole West Valley Land would be helpless if I did not return."

They listened and smiled, for they thought he was afraid.

Letters from Wu came to Shu proposing a joint attack on Wei and detailing their recent victory. In these letters two feelings were gratified: that of telling the story of their own grandeur and prowess, and that of furthering

the design of a treaty of peace. The Latter Ruler was pleased and sent the letters to Zhuge Liang in Hanzhong.

At that time, the army was in excellent state, the soldiers hardy, the horses strong. There were plentiful supplies of all kinds. Zhuge Liang was just going to propose a new war.

On receipt of the letter, he made a great banquet to discuss an expedition. A severe gale came on from the northeast and brought down a fir tree in front of the general's shelter. It was an inauspicious omen to all the officers, and they were troubled.

Zhuce Liang cast lots to know what portent was intended, and announced, "That gale signals the loss of a great leader."

They hardly believed him. But before the banquet ended, two sons of Zhao Yun, Zhao Tong and Zhao Guang, came and wished to see the Prime Minister.

Zhuge Liang, deeply affected, threw aside his wine cup and cried, "That is it. Zhao Yun is gone!"

When the two young men came in, they prostrated themselves and wept, saying, "Our father died the night before at the third watch."

Zhuge Liang staggered and burst into lamentation. "My friend is gone. The country has lost a great beam, and I my right arm!"

Those about him joined in, wiping away their tears. Zhuge Liang bade the two young men go in person to Chengdu to bear the sad tidings to the Emperor.

And the Latter Ruler wept bitterly.

"Zhao Yun was my savior and friend. He saved my life when I was a child in the time of great confusion!" cried the Latter Ruler.

An edict was issued creating Zhao Yun Regent Marshal and Lord of Shunping and giving burial on the east of the Silky Hills near Capital Chengdu. A temple was ordered to his memory and sacrifices were offered in four seasons.



From Changshan came a general, tiger bold,
In wit and valor he was fitting mate
For Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, his exploits rivaling
Even theirs. River Han and Dangyang recall
His name. Twice in his stalwart arms he bore
The prince, his well-loved leader's son and heir.
In storied page his name stands out, writ large.
Fair record of most brave and loyal deeds.



The Latter Ruler showed his affectionate gratitude to the late leader, not only in according him most honorable burial, but in kindness to his sons. The elder, Zhao Tong, was made General in the Tiger Army and the younger, Zhao Guang, Station General. He also set guards over the tomb.

When the two sons had left, the ministers reported to the Latter Ruler: "The dispositions of the army are complete, and the Prime Minister proposes to march against Wei without delay."

Talking this over with one and another, the Latter Ruler found the courtiers much inclined to a cautious policy and somewhat fearful. And the doubts entered into the Latter Ruler's mind so that he could not decide. Then came a memorial from Zhuge Liang, and the messenger, Yang Yi, was

called into audience and gave it to the Latter Ruler. The Emperor spread it on the table and read:

“The First Ruler always said: ‘Han and rebels cannot coexist; a ruler’s domain cannot be confined.’ Wherefore he laid upon me, thy minister, to destroy the rebels. Measuring my powers by his perspicacity, he knew that I should attack and oppose my talents, inadequate as they might be, to their strength, for, if I did not, the royal domain would be destroyed. It was a question whether to await destruction without effort, or to attack. Wherefore, he assigned me the task confidently. Thenceforward, this task occupied all my thoughts.

“Considering that the south should be made secure before the north could be attacked, I braved the heat of summer and plunged deep into the wilds of the Man nations. Not that I was careless of myself or the soldiers, but urged by the one consideration—that the royal domain should not be restricted to the capital of Shu—I faced dangers in obedience to the First Ruler’s behest. But there were critics who said that I should not do it.

“Now the rebels have been weakened in the west and have become defeated in the east. The rule of war is to take advantage of the enemy’s weakness, and so now is the time to attack. I shall discuss the various circumstances in order.

“The enlightenment of the Founder of the Hans, Liu Bang, rivaled the glory of the sun and moon; his counselors were profound as the ocean abyss. Nevertheless, he trod a hazardous path and suffered losses, only attaining repose after passing through great dangers. Your Majesty does not reach his level, nor do your counselors equal Zhang

Liang and Chen Ping. Yet while we desired victory, we would sit idle, waiting till the empire should become settled. This attitude is beyond my comprehension.

“Imperial Protector Liu Yao and Governor Wang Lang each occupied a territory. They passed their time in talking of tranquility and discussing plans, quoting the sayings of the sages till they were filled with doubts and obsessed with difficulties. So this year was not the time to fight, nor next year the season to punish, and, thus talking, it came about that Sun Ce grew powerful and possessed himself of all the South Land. This sort of behavior I cannot understand.

“In craft, Cao Cao surpassed all humans. He could wield armies like the great strategists of old, Sun Zi and Wu Qi. Yet he was surrounded in Nanyang, was in danger at Wuchao, was in difficulties at Qilian, was hard-pressed in Liyang, was nearly defeated at Beishan, and nearly killed at Tong Pass. And yet, after all these experiences, there was a temporary and artificial state of equilibrium. How much less can I, a man of feeble powers, bring about a decision without running risks? I fail to understand.

“Cao Cao failed in five attacks on Changba, and four times crossed Lake Chaohu without success. He employed Li Zu, who betrayed him, and put his trust in Xiahou Yuan, who was defeated and died. The First Ruler always regarded Cao Cao as an able man, and yet Cao Cao made such mistakes. How, then, can I, in my worn-out condition, avoid any error? I do not understand why.

“Only one year has elapsed since I went into Hanzhong, yet we have lost Zhao Yun, Yang Qun, Ma Yun, Yan Zhi, Ding Li, Bo Shou,

Liu He, Deng Tong, and others, and leaders of rank and generals of stations, to the number of near eighty, all people unsurpassed in dash and valor, and more than a thousand of the specialized forces of horse and trained cavalry of the Sou and the Tangut tribespeople in the Gobi Desert, whose martial spirit we have fostered these ten years all about us, and not only in one region. If we delay much longer, two-thirds of this will have dissipated, and how, then, shall we meet the situation? I do not understand delay.

“The people are stretched and the army exhausted, indeed, but confusion does not cease. If confusion does not cease, then, whether we go on or stand still, the drain is the same. Does it seem that attack should not be made yet? Is it that the rebels are to be allowed to obtain a permanent hold on some territory? I do not understand the arguments.

“A stable condition of affairs is indeed difficult to obtain. Once, when the First Ruler was defeated in Jingzhou, Cao Cao patted himself on the back and said that the empire was settled. Yet, after that, the First Ruler obtained the support of Wu and Yue on the east, took Ba and Shu on the west, and undertook an expedition to the north, wherein Xiahou Yuan lost his life. So Cao Cao’s calculations proved erroneous, and the affairs of Han seemed about to prosper. But, still later, Wu proved false to pledges, our Guan Yu was defeated, we sustained a check at Zigui...and Cao Pi assumed the imperial style. Such events prove the difficulty of forecast. I shall strive on to the end, but the final result, whether success or failure, whether gain or loss, is beyond my powers to foresee.”

The Latter Ruler was convinced, and by edict directed Zhuge Liang to start on the expedition.

Zhuce Liang marched out with three hundred thousand well-trained soldiers, Wei Yan leading the first division, and made all haste to Chencang.

The news soon reached Luoyang, and Sima Yi informed the Ruler of Wei, who called his council.

Then Cao Zhen stepped forth and said, "In the previous campaign, I failed to hold the West Valley Land, and my disgrace is terrible to bear. But now I beg to be given another command, that I may capture Zhuge Liang. Lately, I have found a stalwart soldier for a leader, a man who wields a ninety-pound sword, rides a swift and savage steed, bends the three-hundred-pound bow, and carries hidden about him when he goes into battle three meteor maces with which his aim is certain. So valorous is he that none dare stand against him. He comes from Didao in the West Valley Land and is named Wang Shuang. I would recommend him for my Leader of the Van."

Cao Rui approved at once and summoned this marvel to the hall. There came a nine-span man with a dusky complexion and yellowish eyes, strong as a bear in the hips and with a back supple as a tiger's.

"No need to fear anything with such a man!" said Cao Rui, laughing.

He gave the new hero rich presents, a silken robe and golden breastplate, and gave him the title General Who Possesses Tiger Majesty. And Wang Shuang became Leader of the Van of the new army. Cao Zhen was appointed Commander-in-Chief.

Cao Zhen took leave of his master and left the court. He collected his one hundred fifty thousand veterans and, in consultation with Guo Huai and Zhang He, decided upon the strategic points to be guarded.

The first companies of the army of Shu sent out their scouts as far as Chencang. They came back and reported, “A rampart has been built and behind it is a general named Hao Zhao in command. The rampart is very strong and is further defended by thorny barriers. Instead of taking Chencang, which seems difficult, it would be easier to go out to Qishan by the Taibo Mountains, where is a practicable, though winding, road.”

But Zhuge Liang said, “Due north of Chencang is Jieting, so that I must get this city in order to advance.”

Wei Yan was sent to surround Chencang and take it. He went, but days passed without success. Therefore he returned and told his chief the place was impregnable. In his anger, Zhuge Liang was going to put Wei Yan to death, but an officer stepped forth.

Said he, “I have followed the Prime Minister for a long time, but have not achieved worthy service. Now I want to go to Chencang and persuade Hao Zhao to yield. Thus, our army does not need to use a single bow or arrow.”

Others turned their attention to Counselor Jin Xiang.

“How do you think you will persuade him?” said Zhuge Liang. “What will you say?”

“Hao Zhao and I are both from the West Valley Land and pledged friends from boyhood. If I can get to see him, I will so lay matters before him that he must surrender.”

Jin Xiang got permission to try, and rode quickly to the wall of Chencang. Then he called out, "Friend Hao Zhao, your old chum Jin Xiang has come to see you!"

A sentry on the wall told Hao Zhao, who bade them let the visitor enter and bring him up on the wall.

"Friend, why have you come?" asked Hao Zhao.

"I am in the service of Shu, serving under Zhuge Liang as an assistant in the Tactical Department. I am treated exceedingly well, and my chief has sent me to say something to you."

Hao Zhao was rather annoyed, and said, "Zhuge Liang is my enemy. I serve Wei while you serve Shu. Each serves his own lord. We were brothers once, but now we are enemies. So do not say any more."

And the visitor was requested to take his leave. Jin Xiang tried to reopen the conversation, but Hao Zhao left him and went up on the tower. The Wei soldiers hurried Jin Xiang onto his horse and led him to the gate. As he passed out, he looked up and saw his friend leaning on the guardrail.

He pulled up his horse, pointed with his whip at Hao Zhao, and said, "My friend and worthy brother, why has your friendship become so thin?"

"Brother, you know the laws of Wei," replied Hao Zhao. "I have accepted their bounty, and if that leads to death, so be it. Say no more, but return quickly to your master and tell him to come and attack. I am not afraid."

So Jin Xiang had to return and report failure.

"He would not let me begin to explain," said he.

"Try again," said Zhuge Liang. "Go, and really talk to him."

So the go-between soon found himself once more at the foot of the wall.

Hao Zhao presently appeared on the tower, and Jin Xiang shouted to him, "My worthy brother, please listen to my words while I explain clearly. Here you are, holding one single city. How can you think of opposing one hundred thousand troops? If you do not yield, you will be sorry when it is too late. Instead of serving the Great Han, you are serving a depraved country called Wei. Why do you not recognize the decree of Heaven? Why do you not distinguish between the pure and the foul? Think over it."

Then Hao Zhao began to get really angry. He fitted an arrow to his bow and he called out, "Go! or I will shoot. I meant what I said at first, and I will say no more."

Again, Jin Xiang returned and reported failure to Zhuge Liang.

"The fool is very ill-mannered," said Zhuge Liang. "Does he think he can beguile me into sparing the city?"

He called up some of the local people and asked about the forces in the city. They told him about three thousand.

"I do not think such a small place can beat me," said Zhuge Liang. "Attack quickly before any reinforcements can arrive."

Thereupon, the assailants brought up scaling ladders, upon the platforms of which ten or more men could stand. These were surrounded by planks as protection. The other soldiers had short ladders and ropes, and, at the beat of the drum, they attempted to scale the walls.

But when Hao Zhao saw the ladders being brought up, he made his soldiers shoot fire arrows at them. Zhuge Liang did not expect this. He knew the city was not well-prepared for defense, and he had had the great ladders brought up and bade the soldiers take the wall with a rush. He was greatly chagrined when the fire arrows set his ladders on fire and so many

of his soldiers were burned. And as the arrows and stones rained down from the wall, the soldiers of Shu were forced to retire.

Zhuge Liang angrily said, "So you burn my ladders! Then I will use battering rams."

So the rams were brought and placed against the walls and again the signal given for assault. But the defenders brought up great stones suspended by ropes, which they swung down at the battering rams and so broke them to pieces.

Next, the besiegers set to work to bring up earth and fill the moat, and Liao Hua led three thousand soldiers to excavate a tunnel under the ramparts. But Hao Zhao cut a counter-trench within the city and turned that device.

So the struggle went on for near a month, and still the city was not taken. Zhuge Liang was very depressed.

That was not all. The scouts reported: "From the east there is coming a relief force of Wei, the flags of which bear the name 'Van Leader Wang Shuang.'"

Zhuge Liang asked, "Who wants to go out and oppose this force?"

Wei Yan offered himself.

"No," said Zhuge Liang, "you are our Van Leader. We must test Wang Shuang first."

General Xie Xiong offered his services. They were accepted, and Xie Xiong was given three thousand troops. After he had gone, Zhuge Liang decided to send a second force, and for command of this General Gong Qi volunteered and was accepted. Gong Qi also had three thousand troops.

Then, Zhuge Liang feared lest there would be a sortie from the city to aid the relief force just arriving, so he led off the army seven miles and

made a camp.

The first body sent against Wang Shuang had no success: Xie Xiong fell almost immediately under Wang Shuang's great sword. The men fled and Wang Shuang pursued, and so came upon Gong Qi, who had come to support his colleague. Gong Qi met a similar fate, being slain in the third bout.

When the defeated parties returned, Zhuge Liang was anxious and called up Liao Hua, Wang Ping, and Zhang Ni to go out to check this Wang Shuang. They went and drew up in formal array, and then Zhang Ni rode to the front. Wang Shuang rode to meet him, and they two fought several bouts. Then, Wang Shuang ran away, and Zhang Ni followed.

His colleague, Wang Ping, suspected this flight was but a ruse, so he called to Zhang Ni, "Do not follow the fleeing general!"

Zhang Ni then turned, but Wang Shuang turned also and hurled one of his meteor hammers, which hit Zhang Ni in the back so that he fell forward and lay over the saddle. Wang Shuang rode on to follow up this advantage, but Liao Hua and Wang Ping poured out and checked him. Wang Shuang's whole force then came on and slew many of the troops of Shu.

Zhang Ni was hurt internally and vomited blood at times. He came back and told Zhuge Liang, saying, "Wang Shuang is very terrible and no one can stand up to him. He camps outside Chencang, building a strong stockade and so making the city with double walls and a deep moat."

Having lost two generals, and a third being wounded, Zhuge Liang called up Jiang Wei and said, "We are stopped this way. Can you suggest another road?"

"Yes," said Jiang Wei. "Chencang is too well protected and, with Hao Zhao as defender and Wang Shuang as supporter, cannot be taken. I would

propose to check Chencang by leaving a general here, who shall make a strong camp with the support of the hills. Then try to hold the roads so that the attack from Jieting may be prevented. Then, if you will send a strong force against Qishan, I can do something which will capture Cao Zhen.”

Zhuge Liang agreed. He sent Wang Ping and Li Hui to hold the narrow road to Jieting, and Wei Yan was sent to guard the way from Chencang. And then the army marched out of the Xie Valley by a small road and made for Qishan.

Now Cao Zhen still remembered bitterly that in the last campaign Sima Yi had filched from him the credit he hoped to obtain. So when he received the commission of defending the capitals against the invading forces, he detached Guo Huai and Sun Li and sent them to hold positions east and west. Then he had heard that Chencang was threatened, so had sent Wang Shuang to its relief, and now to his joy he heard of his henchman’s success. He placed Grand Commander Fei Yao in command of the van and stationed other generals at strategic and commanding points.

Then, they caught a spy. He was taken into the presence of the Commander-in-Chief to be questioned.

The man knelt down and said, “I am not really a spy in the bad sense. I was bringing a secret communication for you, Sir, but I was captured by one of the parties in ambush. Pray send away your attendants.”

The man’s bonds were loosed and the tent cleared.

The captive said, “I am a confidant of Jiang Wei, who has entrusted me with a secret letter.”

“Where is the letter?”

The man took it from among his garments and presented it to Cao Zhen, who read:

“I, Jiang Wei, your guilty general, make a hundred prostrations to the great leader Cao Zhen, now in the field. I have never forgotten that I was in the employment of Wei and disgraced myself; having enjoyed favors, I never repaid them. Lately I have been an unhappy victim of Zhuge Liang’s wiles and so fell into the depths. But I never forgot my old allegiance. How could I forget?

“Now, happily the army of Shu has gone west, and Zhuge Liang trusts me. I rely upon your leading of an army this way. If resistance be met, then you may simulate defeat and retire, but I shall be behind and will make a blaze as signal. Then I shall set fire to their stores, whereupon you will face about and attack. Zhuge Liang ought to fall into your hands. If it be that I cannot render service and repay my debt to the state, then punish me for my former crime.

“If this should be deemed worthy of your attention, then without delay communicate your commands.”

The letter pleased Cao Zhen, and he said, “This is heaven-sent help to aid me in an achievement.”

Cao Zhen rewarded the messenger and bade him return to say that it was accepted.

Then he called Fei Yao to his councils and said, “I have just had a secret letter from Jiang Wei telling me to act in a certain fashion.”

But Fei Yao replied, “Zhuge Liang is very crafty, and Jiang Wei is very knowing. If by chance Zhuge Liang has planned all this and sent this man,

we may fall into a snare.”

“But Jiang Wei is really a man of Wei. He was forced into surrender. Why are you suspicious?”

“My advice is not to go, but to remain here on guard. Let me go to meet this man, and any service I can accomplish will redound to your credit. And if there be any craft, I can meet it for you.”

Cao Zhen approved this and bade Fei Yao take fifty thousand troops by way of the Xie Valley.

Fei Yao marched away and halted after the second or third stage and send out scouts. This was done, and the scouts reported that the Shu army was coming through the valley. Fei Yao at once advanced, but before the troops of Shu got into contact with him, they retired. Fei Yao pursued. Then the troops of Shu came on again. Just as Fei Yao was forming up for battle, the Shu army retreated again. And these maneuvers were repeated thrice, and a day and a night passed without any repose for the Wei army.

At length, rest was imperative, and they were on the point of entrenching themselves to prepare food when a great hubbub arose all around, and with beating of drums and blaring of trumpets, the whole country was filled with the soldiers of Shu. Suddenly, there was a stir nearby the great standard, and out came a small four-wheeled chariot in which sat Zhuge Liang. He bade a herald call the leader of the Wei army to a parley.

Fei Yao rode out and, seeing Zhuge Liang, he secretly rejoiced.

Turning to those about him, Fei Yao said, “If the soldiers of Shu come on, you are to retire and look out for a signal. If you see a blaze, you are to

turn and attack, for you will be reinforced by Jiang Wei.”

Then Fei Yao rode to the front and shouted, “You rebel leader in front, there. How dare you come here again after the last defeat?”

Zhuge Liang replied, “Go and call Cao Zhen to a parley.”

“My chief, Cao Zhen, is of the royal stock. Think you that he will come to parley with rebels?”

Zhuge Liang angrily waved his fan, and there came forth Ma Dai and Zhang Ni and their troops with a rush. The Wei army retired. But ere they had gone far, they saw a blaze in the rear of the advancing host of Shu and heard a great shouting. Fei Yao could only conclude that this was the signal of Jiang Wei he was looking for, and so he faced about to attack.

But the enemy also turned about and retired. Fei Yao led the pursuit, sword in hand, hastening to the point whence the shouting came. Nearing the signal fire, the drums beat louder than ever, and then out came two armies, one under Guan Xing and the other under Zhang Bao, while arrows and stones rained from the hilltops. The Wei troops could not stand it and knew not only they were beaten, but beaten by a ruse. Fei Yao tried to withdraw his force into the shelter of the valley to rest, but the enemy pressed on him, and the army of Wei fell into confusion. Pressing upon each other, many fell into the streams and were drowned.

Fei Yao could do nothing but flee for his life. Just as he was passing by a steep hill there appeared a cohort, and the leader was Jiang Wei.

Fei Yao began to upbraid him, crying, “Faithless ingrate! I have haplessly fallen in your treachery and craftiness!”

Jiang Wei replied, “You are the wrong victim. We meant to capture Cao Zhen, not you. You would do well to yield!”

But Fei Yao only galloped away toward a ravine. Suddenly, the ravine filled with flame. Then he lost all hope. The pursuers were close behind, so Fei Yao, with a sword, put an end to his own life.

Of the army of Wei, many surrendered. The Shu army pressed home their advantage and, hastening forward, reached Qishan and made a camp. There, the army was mustered and put in order.

Jiang Wei received a reward, but he was chagrined that Cao Zhen had not been taken.

“My regret is that I did not slay Cao Zhen,” said he.

“Indeed, yes,” replied Zhuge Liang. “It is a pity that a great scheme should have had so small a result.”

Cao Zhen was very sad when he heard of the loss of Fei Yao. He consulted Guo Huai as to a new plan to drive back the enemy.

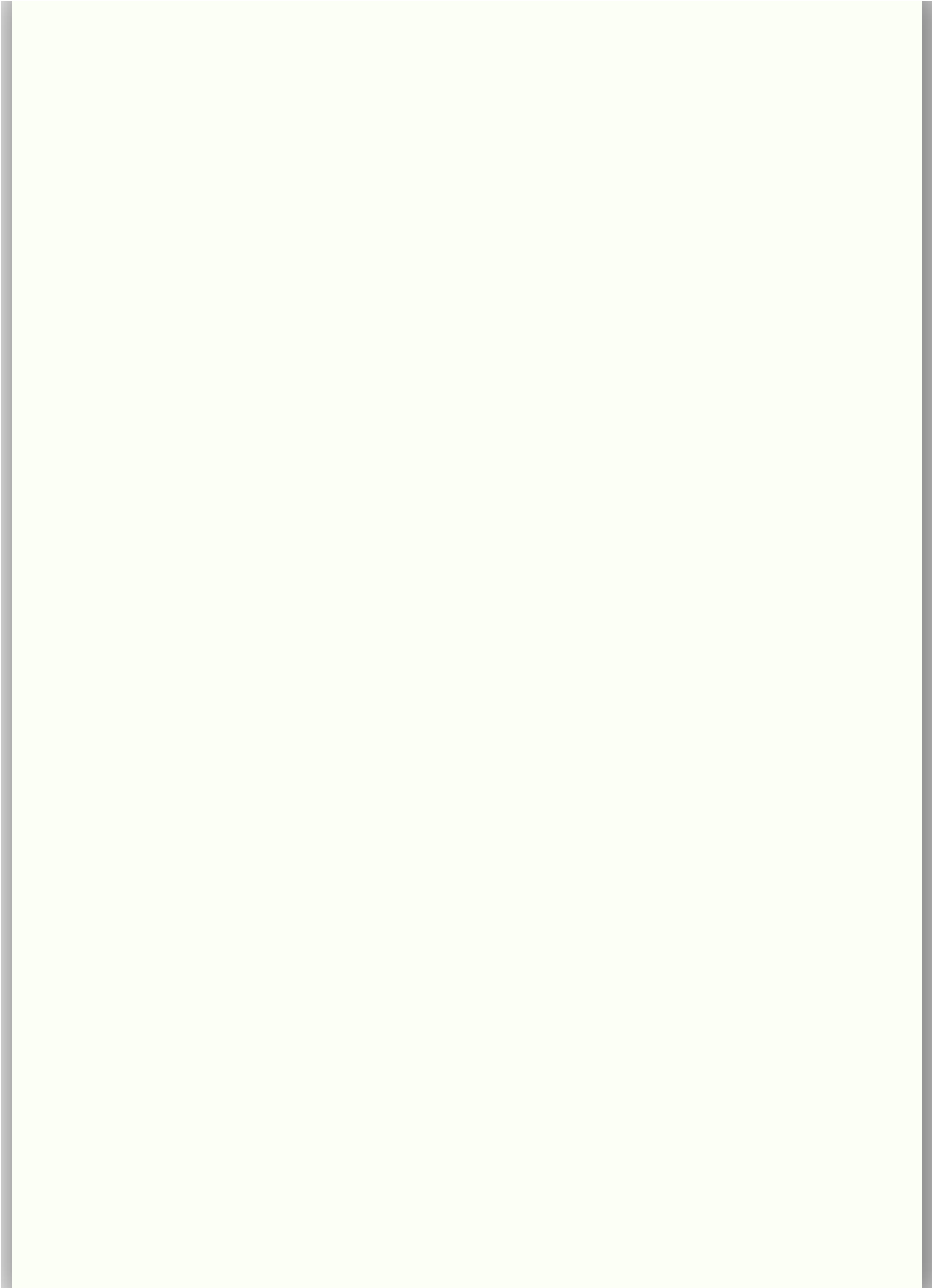
Meanwhile, flying messengers had gone to the capital with news of Zhuge Liang’s arrival at Qishan and the defeat. Cao Rui called Sima Yi to ask for a plan to meet these new conditions.

“I have a scheme all ready, not only to turn back Zhuge Liang, but to do so without any exertion on our part. They will retire of their own will.”

Cao Zhen’s wits are dull, so he
Fights on Sima Yi’s strategy.

The strategy will appear in the next chapter.





Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIII

CHAPTER 98

PURSUING THE SHU ARMY, WANG SHUANG MEETS HIS DEATH; RAIDING
CHENCANG, ZHUGE LIANG SCORES A VICTORY.

Now Sima Yi spoke to the Ruler of Wei, saying, "I have said repeatedly that Zhuge Liang would come against us by way of Chencang; wherefore I set Hao Zhao to guard it. If Zhuge Liang did invade, he could easily obtain his supplies by that road. But with Hao Zhao and Wang Shuang on guard there, he will not dare to come that way. It is very difficult to get supplies any other way. Therefore, I can give the invaders a month to exhaust their food. Hence their advantage lies in forcing a battle; ours is postponing it as long as possible. Wherefore, I pray Your Majesty order Cao Zhen to hold passes and positions tenaciously and on no account to seek battle. In a month, the enemy will have to retreat, and that will be our opportunity."

Cao Rui was pleased to hear so succinct a statement, but he said, "Since, Noble Sir, you foresaw all this so plainly, why did you not lead an army to prevent it?"

"It is not because I grudged the effort, but I had to keep the army here to guard against Lu Xun of Wu. Sun Quan will declare himself 'Emperor' before long. If he does, he will be afraid of Your Majesty's attack, and so he will try to invade us first. I shall be ready to defend our frontier. The army is prepared."

Just then, one of the courtiers announced dispatches from Cao Zhen on military affairs, and Sima Yi closed his speech, saying, "Your Majesty should send someone especially to caution the Commander to be careful not

to be tricked by Zhuge Liang, not to pursue rashly, and never to penetrate deeply into the enemy country.”

The Ruler of Wei gave the order, and he sent the command by the hand of Minister Han Ji and gave him authority to warn Cao Zhen against giving battle.

Sima Yi escorted the royal messenger out of the city and, at parting, said, “I am giving this magnificent opportunity to obtain glory to Cao Zhen, but do not tell him the suggestion was mine; only quote the royal command. Tell him that defense is the best, pursuit is to be most cautious, and he is not to send any impetuous leader to follow up the enemy.”

Han Ji agreed and took leave.

Cao Zhen was deep in affairs connected with his army when they brought news of a royal messenger, but he went forth to bid Han Ji welcome. When the ceremonial receipt of the edict had come to an end, he retired to discuss matters with Guo Huai and Sun Li.

“That is Sima Yi’s idea,” said Guo Huai with a laugh.

“But what of the idea?” asked Cao Zhen.

“It means that he perfectly understands Zhuge Liang’s plans, and he will eventually have to be called in to defeat Shu.”

“But if the Shu army holds its ground?”

“We will send Wang Shuang to reconnoiter and keep on the move along the byroads so that they dare not attempt to bring up supplies. They must retreat when they have no more to eat, and we shall be able to beat them.”

Then said Sun Li, "Let me go out to Qishan as if to escort a convoy from the West Valley Land, only the carts shall be laden with combustibles instead of grain. We will sprinkle sulfur and saltpeter over wood and reeds. The troops of Shu, who lack supplies, will surely seize the convoy and take it to their own camp, when we will set fire to the carts. When they are blazing, our hidden men can attack."

"It seems an excellent plan," said Cao Zhen.

And he issued the requisite orders: Sun Li to pretend to escort a convoy; Wang Shuang to prowl about the by-roads; and Guo Huai and various generals to command in the Ji Valley, Jieting, and other strategic points. Also Zhang Hu, son of Zhang Liao, was made Leader of the Van, and Yue Chen, son of Yue Jin, was his second. These two were to remain on guard in the outermost camp.

Now at Qishan, Zhuge Liang sought to bring on a battle, and daily sent champions to provoke a combat. But the men of Wei would not come out.

Then Zhuge Liang called Jiang Wei and certain others to him and said, "The enemy refuse battle because they know we are short of food. We can get none by way of Chencang, and all other roads are very difficult. I reckon the grain we brought with us will not last a month. What must we do?"

While thus perplexed, they heard that many carts of provisions for Wei were passing by from the West Valley Land, and the convoy was commanded by Sun Li.

"What is known of this Sun Li?" asked Zhuge Liang.

A certain man of Wei replied, "He is a bold man. Once, he was out hunting with the Ruler of Wei on Great Rock Hill, and a tiger suddenly appeared in front of his master's chariot. He jumped off his horse and dispatched the beast with his sword. He was rewarded with a Commandership. He is an intimate friend of Cao Zhen."

"This is a ruse," said Zhuge Liang. "They know we are short of food, and those carts are only a temptation. They are laden with combustibles. How can they imagine that I shall be deceived by this sort of thing, when I have fought them with fire so many times? If we go to seize the convoy, they will come and raid our camp. But I will meet ruse with ruse."

Then Zhuge Liang sent Ma Dai with orders: "You and three thousand troops are to make your way to the enemy's store camp and, when the wind serves, to start a fire. When the stores are burning, the soldiers of Wei will come to surround our camp. That is how we will provoke a battle."

He also sent Ma Zhong and Zhang Ni with five thousand troops each to halt near the camp so that they might attack from without.

These having gone, he called Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, and said, "The outermost camp of Wei is on the main road. This night, when the enemy see a blaze, our camp will be attacked, so you two are to lie in wait on the two sides of the Wei camp and seize it when they have left."

Calling Hu Ban and Wu Yi, he said, "You are to lie in wait outside the camp to cut off the retreat of the force of Wei."

All these arrangements made, Zhuge Liang betook himself to a summit of the Qishan Mountains to watch the results.

The soldiers of Wei heard that their enemies were coming to seize the grain convoy and ran to tell Sun Li, who sent on a message to Cao Zhen.

Cao Zhen sent to the chief camp for Zhang Hu and Yue Chen and told them, "Look out for a signal blaze; that would mean the coming of the army of Shu, and then you are to raid the Shu camp immediately."

Zhang Hu and Yue Chen sent watchers on the tower to look out for the promised blaze.

Meanwhile, Sun Li marched over and hid in the west hills to await the coming of the men of Shu. That night, at the second watch, Ma Dai came with his three thousand troops all silent, the soldiers with gags, the horses with lashings round their muzzles. They saw tier after tier of carts on the hills, making an enclosure like a walled camp, and on the carts were planted many flags.

They waited. Presently, the southwest wind came up, and then they launched the fire. Soon all the carts were in a blaze that lit up the sky. Sun Li saw the blaze and could only conclude that the troops of Shu had arrived and his own side were giving the signal, so he dashed out to attack. But soon, two parties of soldiers were heard behind him closing in. These were Ma Zhong and Zhang Ni, who soon had Sun Li as in a net. Then he heard a third ominous roll of drums, which heralded the approach of Ma Dai from the direction of the blaze.

Under these several attacks, the troops of Wei quailed and gave way. The fire grew more and more fierce. Soldiers ran and horses stampeded, and the dead were too many to count. Sun Li made a dash through the smoke and fire of the battle and got away.

When Zhang Hu and Yue Chen saw the fire, they threw open the gates of their camp and sallied forth to help defeat the army of Shu by seizing their camp. But when they reached the Shu camp, they found it empty. So

they hurried to set out to return. That was the moment for Hu Ban and Wu Yi to appear and cut off their retreat. However, they fought bravely and got through. But when at length they reached their own camp, they were met by arrows flying thick as locusts—for Guan Xing and Zhang Bao had taken possession in their absence.

They could only set out for headquarters to report their mishap. As they neared Cao Zhen's camp, they met another remnant marching up. They were Sun Li's soldiers, and the two parties went into camp together and told the tale of their victimization. Cao Zhen thereafter looked to his defenses and attacked no more.

Thus victorious, the soldiers of Shu went to Zhuge Liang, who at once dispatched secret directions to Wei Yan. Then Zhuge Liang gave orders to break camp and retreat.

This move was not understood, and Yang Yi asked the leader, "O Prime Minister, you have just scored a victory, and the enemy have lost their bravery; why retreat?"

"Because we are short of food," said Zhuge Liang. "Our success lay in swift victory, but the enemy will not fight, and thus they weaken us day by day. Though we have worsted them now, they will soon be reinforced, and their light cavalry can cut off our provisions. Then we could not retreat at all. For a time, they will not dare look at us, and we must take the occasion to do what they do not expect, and retreat. But I am solicitous about Wei Yan, who is on the Chencang road to keep off Wang Shuang. I fear he cannot get away. So I have sent him certain orders to slay Wang Shuang, and then the force of Wei will not dare to pursue."

Therefore the retreat began, but to deceive the enemy, the watchmen were left in the empty camp to beat the watches through the night.

Cao Zhen was depressed at his recent misfortune. Then they told him Zhang He, General of the Left Army, had come. Zhang He came up to the gate, dismounted, and entered.

When he saw Cao Zhen, he said, "I have received a royal command to come and to be included in your arrangements."

"Did you take leave of friend Sima Yi?" asked Cao Zhen.

Zhang He said, "He said to me that if you won the field, the Shu army would stay, but if you did not, the Shu army would retreat. It seems that our side has missed success. Have you since found out what the troops of Shu are doing?"

"Not yet."

So Cao Zhen sent out some scouts, and they found empty camps. There were flags flying, but the army had been gone two days. Cao Zhen was disgusted.

When Wei Yan received his secret orders, he broke up camp that night and hastened toward Hanzhong. Wang Shuang's scouts heard this and told their chief, who hurried in pursuit. After about seven miles, he came in sight of Wei Yan's ensigns.

As soon as Wang Shuang got within hailing distance, he shouted, "Do not flee, Wei Yan!"

But no one looked back, so he again pressed forward.

Then he heard one of his guards behind him shouting, "There is a blaze in the camp outside the city wall. I think it is some wile of the enemy!"

Wang Shuang pulled up and, turning, saw the fire. He therefore tried to draw off his troops. Just as he passed a hill, a horseman suddenly came out of a wood.

"Here is Wei Yan!" shouted the horseman.

Wang Shuang was too startled to defend himself and fell at the first stroke of Wei Yan's blade. Wang Shuang's troops thought this was only the beginning of an ambush and serious attack, so they scattered. But really, Wei Yan only had thirty men with him, and they moved off leisurely toward Hanzhong.



No man could better Zhuge Liang's foresight keen,
Brilliant as a comet where it flashed:
Back and forth at will his soldiers dashed,
And Wang Shuang's dead body marked where they
had been.



The secret orders sent to Wei Yan were that he was to keep back thirty men and hide beside Wang Shuang's camp till that warrior left. Then the camp was to be set on fire. After that, the thirty were to wait till Wang Shuang's return to fall upon him. The plan being successfully carried out, Wei Yan followed the retreating army into Hanzhong and handed over his command.

The Shu army having retreated safely to Hanzhong, feastings were held in celebration of the event.

Zhang He, who, failing to come up with the retiring enemy, presently returned to camp. Hao Zhao sent a letter to say that Wang Shuang had met his end. This loss caused Cao Zhen deep grief, so that he became ill and had to return to Luoyang. He left Zhang He, Sun Li, and Guo Huai to guard the approaches to Changan.

Meanwhile in the South Land, at a court held by Sun Quan, the Prince of Wu, a certain spy reported: "Prime Minister Zhuge Liang has invaded Wei twice, and Commander-in-Chief Cao Zhen has suffered great losses."

Thereupon, his ministers urged on Sun Quan that he should attack Wei and try to gain the Middle Land.

However, Sun Quan could not make up his mind, and Zhang Zhao endeavored to prove to him that his hour was come by this memorial:

"I have heard that a phoenix has lately appeared in the hills east of Wuchang and bowed, that a yellow dragon has been seen in the Great River. My lord, your virtue matches that of Kings Yu and Tang, and your understanding is on a level with that of Kings Wen and Wu. Wherefore, you should now proceed to the imperial style and then raise an army to maintain your authority."

And many other officers supported Zhang Zhao's proposal. They finally persuaded Sun Quan to decide upon the 'tiger' day in the forth month, in summer. They prepared an altar on the south of Wuchang, and on that day his courtiers formally requested him to ascend to the high place and assume the style of "Emperor."

"Yellow Dragon" was chosen as the style of the reign (AD 229). Sun Jian, the deceased father of the new Emperor, was given the title of the Martialy Glorious Emperor, his mother Empress Wu, and his elder brother, Sun Ce, was made posthumously Prince of Changsha, and his son, Sun Deng, was styled Heir Apparent. The rank of Left Companion of the Heir Apparent was conferred upon the eldest son of Zhuge Jin, Zhuge Ke. The rank of Right Companion of the Heir Apparent was bestowed upon the second son of Zhang Zhao, Zhang Xi.

This son of Zhuge Jin was a man of seven-span height, very clever, and especially apt at capping verses. Sun Quan liked him much.

When Zhuge Ke was six, he went with his father to a banquet. Sun Quan noticed that Zhuge Jin had a long face, so he bade a man lead in a donkey, and he wrote on it with chalk, "My friend Zhuge Jin". Everyone roared with laughter. But the youngster ran up and added a few strokes making it read, "My friend Zhuge Jin's donkey." The guests were astonished at his ready wit, and praised him. Sun Quan was also pleased and made him a present of the donkey.

Another day, at a large, official banquet, Sun Quan sent the boy with a goblet of wine to each courtier.

When he came to Zhang Zhao, the old man declined it, saying, "This is not the proper treatment for old age."

"Can you not make him drink?" said Sun Quan.

Then, said Zhuge Ke to the old gentleman, “You remember Lu Wang: he was ninety and yet gripped the signaling flags and wielded the axes of an army commander in the field. He never spoke of age. Nowadays in battle, we put seniors behind, but at the banquet table we give them a front place. How can you say we do not treat old age properly?”

Zhang Zhao had no reply ready, and so had to drink. This sort of precocity endeared the boy to Sun Quan, and now Sun Quan made him the Left Companion to the Heir Apparent.

Zhang Zhao’s son, Zhang Xi, was chosen for honor on account of the eminent services of his father, whose rank was only below that of Prince. Then Gu Yong became Prime Minister and Lu Xun, Regent Marshal. And Lu Xun assisted the Heir Apparent in the custody of Wuchang. Sun Quan himself returned to Jianye.

As Sun Quan seemed powerful and well-established, the whole of his court turned their thoughts toward the suppression of Wei. Only Zhang Zhao opposed it and tendered counsels of internal reform.

“It is not well to begin Your Majesty’s new reign with fighting. Rather improve learning and hide the sword; establish schools and so give the people the blessings of peace. Make a treaty with Shu to share the empire, and lay your plans slowly and carefully.”

Sun Quan saw the wisdom of the advice. He sent an envoy into the River Lands to lay the scheme of an alliance before the Latter Ruler. The Latter Ruler called his courtiers to discuss it. Many were opposed to Sun Quan as an upstart usurper and advised rejection of any friendly proposals from him.

Then Jiang Wan said, "We should get the opinion of Zhuge Liang."

So they sent and put the matter before the Prime Minister.

Zhuce Liang said, "Send an envoy with presents and felicitations and ask Sun Quan to send Lu Xun against Wei. Then Sima Yi will be engaged with Wu, and I may once more march to Qishan and attempt Capital Changan."

Wherefore, the Chair of the Secretariat, Chen Zhen, was sent with presents of horses, a jeweled belt, gold and pearls, and precious things into the South Land to congratulate the Ruler of Wu on his newly assumed dignity. And the presents were accepted, and the bearer thereof honored and allowed to return.

When this was all over, Sun Quan called in Lu Xun and asked his opinion about the concerted attack on Wei. Lu Xun saw through the scheme at once.

"We owe this to Zhuge Liang's fear of Sima Yi," said he. "However, we must consent since Shu asks it. We will make a show of raising an army and, in a measure, support them. When Zhuge Liang has actually attacked Wei, we will make for the Middle Land ourselves."

Orders went forth for enlisting and training Jingzhou soldiers ready for an expedition to start presently.

When Chen Zhen returned to Hanzhong and reported to the Prime Minister, Zhuge Liang was still worried that he could not advance hastily by the road through Chencang. So he sent scouts out first.

Soon, the scouts brought the news back: "The defender of the city, Hao Zhao, is very ill."

“That means success for me,” cried he, cheering.

He called in Wei Yan and Jiang Wei, and said, “Take five thousand troops and hasten to Chencang. If you see a blaze, then attack.”

They could hardly believe what the order was meant and came again to see their chief and asked the exact date of departure.

Replied Zhuge Liang, “In three days you should be ready to march. Do not come to take leave of me, but set out as soon as possible.”

After they had left his tent, he summoned Guan Xing and Zhang Bao and gave them secret instructions.

Now when Guo Huai heard that Commander Hao Zhao of Chencang was ill, he and Zhang He talked over the matter.

Guo Huai said, “Hao Zhao is very ill. You had better go and relieve him. I will report to the capital what we have done that they may arrange.”

So Zhang He started with his three thousand troops to relieve the sick man.

Hao Zhao was indeed at the point of death, and suddenly they told him that the army of Shu had reached the walls. Hao Zhao roused himself and bade them go on the ramparts. But then fire broke out at each gate, a panic spread in the city, and the noise of the confusion startled the dying man so that he passed away just as the troops of Shu were bursting in.

When Wei Yan and Jiang Wei reached the walls, they were perplexed to find no sign of life. No flags were flying, and no watchmen struck the

hours. They delayed their attack for a time. Then they heard a bomb, and suddenly the wall was thick with flags, and there appeared the well-known figure of the Prime Minister.

“You have come too late,” cried Zhuge Liang.

Both dropped out of the saddle and prostrated themselves. “Really, you are supernatural, O Prime Minister!” they cried.

They entered the city, and then he explained to them, saying, “I heard the news that Hao Zhao was seriously sick, so I sent you with the deadline of three days as a decoy to calm the people of this city. Then I hid myself in the ranks of another force under Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, which came to Chencang by double marches. Also, I had sent spies into the city to start the fires and throw the defenders into confusion. An army without a leader could never fight, and I could take the city easily. This is an instance of the rule of war, ‘Do the unexpected; attack the unprepared.’”

They bowed. In commiseration, Zhuge Liang sent all the family of Hao Zhao, and his coffin, over to Wei, thus showing his sense of the dead man’s loyalty.

Turning once more to Wei Yan and Jiang Wei, he said, “But do not divest yourself of your armor. Go and attack San Pass and drive away the guards while they are in a state of surprise. If you delay, Wei will have sent reinforcements.”

They went. Surely enough, the capture of San Pass was easy, as the Wei soldiers scattered. But when they went up to look around, they saw a great cloud of dust moving toward them. The Wei reinforcements were already near.

They remarked to each other, “The Prime Minister’s foresight was superhuman.”

When they had looked a little longer, they saw the leader of the Wei army then approaching was Zhang He.

They then divided their soldiers to hold the approaches. When Zhang He saw that all was prepared, he retired. Wei Yan followed and fought a battle, defeating Zhang He heavily.

Wei Yan sent to report his success, but Zhuge Liang had already left Chencang and had gone into the Xie Valley to capture the county of Jianwei. Other armies from Shu followed. Moreover, the Latter Ruler sent Chen Shi to assist in the campaign.

Zhuge Liang then marched his main force to Qishan and there made a camp. Then he called an assembly of officers.

“Twice have I gone out by Qishan without success, but at last I am here. I think Wei will resume the former battleground and oppose us. If so, they will assume that I shall attack Yongcheng and Meicheng and send armies to defend them. But I see Yinping and Wudu are connected with Hanzhong. If I can win these, I can drive a wedge into the Wei force. Who will go to take these places?”

Jiang Wei and Wang Ping offered themselves. The former was sent with ten thousand troops to capture Wudu; the latter, with an equal force, went to Yinping.

Zhang He went back to Changan and saw Guo Huai and Sun Li, to whom he said, “Chencang is lost, Hao Zhao is dead, and San Pass is taken. Zhuge Liang is again at Qishan, and thence has sent out two armies.”

Guo Huai was frightened, saying, “In that case, Yongcheng and Meicheng are in danger.”

Leaving Zhang He to guard Changan, Guo Huai sent Sun Li to Yongcheng, and he himself set out at once for Meicheng. He sent an urgent report to Luoyang.

At Wei's next court the Emperor was informed of all the misfortunes in the west: "Chencang has fallen, and Hao Zhao has died. Zhuge Liang has captured San Pass. He is camping at Qishan and is planning to invade Wei."

Cao Rui was alarmed.

Just then, Man Chong reported, "Sun Quan has declared himself Emperor, and Lu Xun is drilling his army in Wuchang. An invasion from the east can be expected soon."

Cao Rui was embarrassed and frightened. Cao Zhen, being ill, could not be consulted, and Sima Yi was called. He was ready with a proposal.

"In my humble opinion, Wu will not attack us," said Sima Yi.

"What makes you think so?" asked the Ruler of Wei.

"Because Zhuge Liang still resents, and wishes to avenge, the event at Xiaoting. He never ceases to desire to absorb Wu. His only fear is that we may swoop down upon Shu. That is why there is an alliance with Wu. Lu Xun knows it also quite well, and he is only making a show of raising an army as they arranged. The truth is he is sitting on the fence. Hence, Your Majesty may disregard the menace on the east, and only protect yourself against Shu."

"Your insight is very profound," said the Ruler of Wei.

Sima Yi was created Commander-in-Chief of all the forces in the west, and the Ruler of Wei directed a courtier to go to Cao Zhen for the seal.

"I would rather go myself," said Sima Yi.

So Sima Yi left the audience and went to the palace of Cao Zhen, where presently he saw the invalid. First he asked after his health and then

gradually opened his errand.

“Shu and Wu have made an alliance to invade Wei and share its domains, and Zhuge Liang is at Qishan the third time. Have you heard, Illustrious Sir?”

“My people have kept back all news as I am ill,” said he, startled. “But if this is true, the country is in danger. Why have they not made you Commander-in-Chief to stop this invasion?”

“I am unequal to the post,” said Sima Yi.

“Bring the seal and give it to him,” said Cao Zhen to his attendants.

“You are anxious on my account. Really I am only come to lend you an arm. I dare not accept the seal.”

Cao Zhen started up, saying, “If you do not take it, I shall have to go to see the Emperor, ill as I am. The Middle Land is in danger.”

“Really the Emperor has already shown his kindness, but I dare not accept his offer.”

“If you have been appointed, then Shu will be driven off.”

Thrice Sima Yi declined the seal, but eventually he received it into his hands as he knew Cao Zhen was sincere. Then he took leave of the Ruler of Wei and marched to Changan.

The seal of office changes hands,
Two armies now one force become.

Sima Yi's success or failure will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIII

CHAPTER 99

ZHUGE LIANG DEFEATS THE WEI ARMY; SIMA YI INVADES THE WEST RIVER LAND.

The fourth month of Beginning Prosperity, seventh year (AD 229), found Zhuge Liang camped at Qishan in three camps, waiting to attack Wei.

When Sima Yi reached Changan, the officer in command, Zhang He, told him all that had happened. He gave Zhang He the post of Leader of the Van, with Dai Ling as his Assistant General and a hundred thousand troops, and then marched out toward the enemy, camping on River Wei's south bank.

When the local commanders Guo Huai and Sun Li went to see the new Commander-in-Chief, he asked, "Have you fought any battle with Shu?"

"Not yet," said they.

Sima Yi said, "The enemy had a long march; their chance lay in attacking quickly. As they have not attacked, they have some deep laid scheme to work out. What news have you from the counties of the West Valley Land?"

Guo Huai replied, "The scouts say that the greatest care is being taken in every county. But there is no news from Wudu and Yinping."

"I must send someone to fight a decisive battle with them there. You get away as quickly and privily as you can to the rescue of those two cities, and then attack the rear of the Shu army so as to throw them into disorder."

They set out to obey these orders, and on the way they fell to discussing Sima Yi.

“How does Sima Yi compare with Zhuge Liang?” said Guo Huai.

“Zhuge Liang is by far the better,” replied Sun Li.

“Though Zhuge Liang may be the cleverer, this scheme of our leader’s yet shows him to be superior to most people. The enemy may have got those two cities, yet when we unexpectedly fall upon their rear, they will certainly be disordered.”

Soon after this, a scout came in to report: “Wang Ping has captured Yinping, and Wudu is in possession of Jiang Wei. Furthermore, the Shu army is not far in front.”

Said Sun Li, “There is some crafty scheme afoot. Why are they prepared for battle in the open when they hold two cities? We had better retire.”

Guo Huai agreed, and they issued orders to face about and retreat. Just then, a bomb exploded, and, at the same time, there suddenly appeared, from the cover of some hills, a small body of troops. On the flag that came forward they read “Han Prime Minister Zhuge Liang,” and in the midst of the company they saw him, seated in a small chariot. On his left was Guan Xing, and on his right, Zhang Bao.

They were quite taken aback.

Zhuce Liang laughed and said, “Do not run away! Did you think that your leader’s ruse would take me in? Sima Yi sent a challenge to fight every day, indeed, while you were to slip round behind my army and attack! I have the two cities, Wudu and Yinping. If you have not come to surrender, then hurry up and fight a battle with me.”

By now, Guo Huai and Sun Li were really frightened. Then behind them there rose a shout as of battle, and Wang Ping and Jiang Wei began to smite them in the rear, while Guan Xing and Zhang Bao bore down upon them in front. They were soon utterly broken, and the two leaders escaped by scrambling up the hillside.

Zhang Bao saw them and was urging his steed forward to catch them, when unhappily he and his horse went over together into a gully. When they picked him up, they found that he had been kicked in the head and was badly hurt.

Zhuge Liang sent him back to Chengdu.

It has been said that Guo Huai and Sun Li escaped. They got back to Sima Yi's camp and said, "Wudu and Yinping were both in the enemy's possession, and Zhuge Liang had prepared an ambush, so that we were attacked front and rear. We lost the day and only escaped on foot."

"It is no fault of yours," said Sima Yi. "The fact is he is sharper than I. Now go to defend Yongcheng and Meicheng and remain on the defensive. Do not go out to give battle. I have a plan to defeat them."

These two having left, Sima Yi called in Zhang He and Dai Ling and said, "Zhuge Liang has captured Wudu and Yinping. He must restore order and confidence among the people of these places and so will be absent from his camp. You two will take ten thousand troops each, start tonight, and make your way quietly to the rear of the Shu army. Then you will attack vigorously. When you have done that, I shall lead out the army in front of them and array ready for battle. While they are in disorder, I shall make my

attack. Their camp ought to be captured. If I can win the advantage of these hills, their defeat will be easy.”

These two left, Dai Ling marching on the left and Zhang He on the right. They took byroads and got well to the rear of the Shu army. In the third watch, they struck the high road and joined forces. Then they marched toward the enemy.

After about ten miles, there was a halt in front. The two leaders galloped up to see what had caused it, and found many straw-carts drawn across the road.

“The enemy has been prepared,” said Zhang He. “We should return.”

Just as they ordered the troops to turn about, torches broke into flame all over the hills, the drums rolled, trumpets blared, and soldiers sprang out on every side.

At the same time, Zhuge Liang shouted from the hilltop, “Dai Ling and Zhang He, listen to my words! Your master reckoned that I should be busy restoring order in the two cities and so should not be in my camp. Wherefore he sent you to take the camp, and you have just fallen into my snare. As you are leaders of no great importance, I shall not harm you. Dismount and yield.”

Zhang He’s wrath blazed forth at this, and he pointed at Zhuge Liang, crying, “You peasant out of the woods, invader of our great country! How dare you use such words with me? Wait till I catch you; I will tear you to shreds!”

He galloped forward to ascend the hill, his spear ready for the thrust. But the arrows and stones pelted too quickly. Then he turned and dashed in among the Shu soldiers, scattering them right and left. He got clear, but he

saw Dai Ling was not with him. At once, he turned back, fought his way to his comrade and brought Dai Ling out safely.

Zhuge Liang, on the hilltop, watched this warrior and saw he was a right doughty fighting man.

“I have heard that soldiers stood aghast when Zhang Fei fought his great fight with Zhang He. Now I can judge Zhang He’s valor for myself. He will do harm to Shu one day if I spare him. He will have to be removed.”

Then, Zhuge Liang returned to his camp.

By this time, Sima Yi had completed his battle line and was waiting the moment of disorder in the Shu army to attack. Then he saw Zhang He and Dai Ling come limping back, dejected and crestfallen.

They said, “Zhuge Liang forestalled us. He was well prepared, and so we were quite defeated.”

“He is more than human!” exclaimed Sima Yi. “We must retreat.”

So the whole army retired into the fortified camps and would not come out.

Thus a great victory fell to Shu, and their booty was immense: weapons and horses innumerable. Zhuge Liang led his army back to camp. Thereafter, he sent parties to offer a challenge at the gate of the Wei camp every day, but the soldiers remained obstinately behind their shelters and would not appear. When this had continued half a month, Zhuge Liang grew sad.

Then came Fei Yi from Capital Chengdu with an edict of the Emperor. Fei Yi was received with all respect, and incense was burnt as propriety demanded. This done, the command was unsealed, and Zhuge Liang read:

“The failure at Jieting was really due to the fault of Ma Su. However, you held yourself responsible and blamed yourself very severely. It would have been a serious matter for me to have withstood your intentions, and so I did what you insisted on.

“However, that was a glorious exploit last year when Wang Shuang was slain. This year, Guo Huai has been driven back and the Qiangs have been reduced; the two counties of Wudu and Yinping have been captured; and you have driven fear into the hearts of all evildoers and thus rendered magnificent services.

“But the world is in confusion, and the original evil has not been destroyed. You fill a great office, for you direct the affairs of the state. It is not well for you to remain under a cloud for any length of time and cloak your grand virtue, wherefore I restore you to the rank of Prime Minister and pray you not to decline the honor.”

Zhuce Liang heard the edict to the end and then said, “My task is not yet accomplished. How can I return to my duties as Prime Minister? I must really decline to accept this.”

Fei Yi said, “If you decline this, you flout the desires of the Emperor and also show contempt for the feelings of the army. At any rate, accept for the moment.”

Then Zhuge Liang humbly bowed acquiescence.

Fei Yi took leave and returned.

Seeing that Sima Yi remained obstinately on the defensive, Zhuge Liang thought of a plan by which to draw him. He gave orders to break camp and retire.

When the scouts told Sima Yi, he said, "We may not move. Certainly there is some deep craftiness in this move."

Zhang He said, "It must mean that their food is exhausted. Why not pursue?"

"I reckon that Zhuge Liang laid up ample supplies last year. Now the wheat is ripe, and he has plenty of every sort. Transport might be difficult, but he could yet hold out half a year. Why should he run away? He sees that we resolutely refuse battle, and he is trying some ruse to inveigle us into fighting. Send out spies to a distance to see what is going on."

They reconnoitered a long way round, and the scouts returned to say that a camp had been formed ten miles away.

"Ah, then he is not running away," said Sima Yi. "Remain on the defensive still more strictly and do not advance."

Ten days passed without further news; nor did the soldiers of Shu offer the usual challenge. Again, spies were sent far afield, and they reported a further retreat of ten miles and a new encampment.

"Zhuge Liang is certainly working some scheme," said Sima Yi. "Do not pursue."

Another ten days passed, and spies went out. The enemy had gone ten miles farther and encamped.

Zhang He said, "What makes you so over-suspicious? I can see that Zhuge Liang is retreating into Hanzhong, only he is doing it gradually and

arousing our suspicion. Why not pursue before it is too late? Let me go and fight one battle.”

“No,” said Sima Yi. “A defeat would destroy the morale of our soldiers, and I will not risk it. Zhuge Liang’s vile tricks are innumerable.”

“If I go and get beaten, I will stand the full rigor of military punishment,” said Zhang He.

“Well, if you are set on going, we will divide the army. You take your wing and go, but you will have to fight your best. I will follow to help in case of need. Tomorrow, you should march only halfway and rest your troops for the battle.”

So Zhang He got independent command of thirty thousand troops and took Dai Ling as his second in command, and he had a few score of generals as assistants. Halfway, they camped. Then Sima Yi, leaving a substantial guard for his camp, set out along the same road with fifty thousand troops.

Zhuce Liang knew the movements of the army of Wei and when Zhang He’s army camped to rest. In the night, he summoned his generals and told them, “The enemy are coming in pursuit and will fight desperately. You will have to fight, every one of you, like ten, but I will set an ambush to attack their rear. Only a wise and bold leader is fit for this task.”

Wang Ping stepped forth and said he was willing to go on this expedition.

“But if you fail, what then?” said Zhuge Liang.

“Then there is the military rule.”

Zhuge Liang sighed. “Wang Ping is most loyal. He is willing to risk wounds and death in his country’s service. However, the enemy are in two divisions, one coming in front, the other trying to get round to the rear. Wang Ping is crafty and bold, but he cannot be in two places at once, so I must have yet another general. Is it that among you there is no other willing to devote himself to death?”

He did not wait long for a reply. Zhang Yi stepped to the front.

“Zhang He is a most famous leader in Wei and valorous beyond all compare. You are not a match for him,” said Zhuge Liang.

“If I fail, may my head fall at the tent door,” said Zhang Yi.

“Since you wish to go, I accept you. Each of you shall have ten thousand veterans. You will hide in the valleys till the enemy come up, and you will let them pass. Then you will fall upon their rear. If Sima Yi comes, you must divide the army, Zhang Yi to hold the rear and Wang Ping to check the advance. But they will fight desperately, and I must find a way to aid you.”

When they had gone, Jiang Wei and Liao Hua were called, and Zhuge Liang said, “I am going to give you a silken bag. You are to proceed secretly into those mountains in front. When you see that Zhang Yi and Wang Ping are in great straits with the enemy, then open the bag and you will find a plan of escape.”

After this, he gave secret instructions to four other generals—Hu Ban, Wu Yi, Ma Zhong, and Zhang Ni—to observe the enemy and, if the enemy seemed confident of victory, to retire, fighting at intervals, till they saw Guan Xing come up, when they could turn and fight their best.

Then, calling Guan Xing, he said to them, “Hide in the valleys with five thousand troops till you see a red flag flutter out, and then fall on the

enemy.”

Zhang He and Dai Ling hurried along like a rain squall till they were suddenly confronted by Ma Zhong, Zhang Ni, Wu Yi, and Hu Ban. Zhang He dashed toward his enemy, and then they retired, stopping at intervals to fight. The Wei army pursued for about seven miles.

It was the sixth moon and very hot, so that soldiers and horses sweated profusely. When they had gone ten miles farther, the soldiers and horses were panting and nearly spent. Then, Zhuge Liang, who had watched the fighting from a hill, gave the signal for Guan Xing to emerge and join battle. Ma Zhong, Zhang Ni, Hu Ban, and Wu Yi all led on their troops. Zhang He and Dai Ling fought well, but they could not extricate themselves and retire.

Presently, with a roll of drums, Wang Ping and Zhang Yi came out and made for the rear to cut the retreat.

“Why do you not fight to death?” shouted Zhang He to his generals when he saw the new dangers.

The soldiers of Wei dashed this way and that, but were stayed at every attempt. Then there was heard another roll of drums, and Sima Yi came up in the rear. He at once signaled to his generals to surround Wang Ping and Zhang Yi.

“Our minister is truly wonderful. The battle goes just as he foretold,” cried Zhang Yi. “He will surely send help now, and we will fight to the death.”

Thereupon, the Shu force were divided into two parties. Wang Ping led one army to hold up Zhang He and Dai Ling; Zhang Yi led the other

division to oppose Sima Yi. On both sides the fighting was keen and continued all the day.

From their station on a hill, Jiang Wei and Liao Hua watched the battle. They saw that the Wei force was very strong and their side was in danger and slowly giving way.

“Now, surely, is the moment to open the bag,” said Jiang Wei.

So the bag was opened, and they read the letter. It said:

“If Sima Yi comes and Wang Ping and Zhang Yi seem hard-pressed, you are to divide forces and go off to attack Sima Yi’s camp, which will cause him to retire, and then you can attack him as his army is in disorder. The actual capture of the camp is not of great moment.”

So Jiang Wei and Liao Hua divided the force and started for the enemy’s camp.

Now Sima Yi had really feared that he would fall victim to some ruse of Zhuge Liang, so he had arranged for messengers and news to meet him at intervals along the road.

Sima Yi was pressing his troops to fight when a messenger galloped up to report, “The soldiers of Shu are making for the main camp by two directions.”

Sima Yi was frightened and changed color. He turned on his generals, saying, “I knew Zhuge Liang would plan some trick, but you did not believe me. You forced me to pursue, and now the whole scheme has gone astray.”

Thereupon he gathered in his army and turned to retire. The troops went hurriedly and got into disorder. Zhang Yi came up behind, causing huge damage to the Wei army. Zhang He and Dai Ling, having but few troops left, sought refuge among the hills. The victory was to Shu, and Guan Xing came up helping in the rout wherever there appeared a chance to strike.

Sima Yi, defeated, hurried to the camp. But when he reached it, the army of Shu had already left. He gathered in his broken army and abused his generals as the cause of his failure.

“You are all ignorant of the proper way to wage war and think it simply a matter of valor and rude strength. This is the result of your unbridled desire to go out and give battle. In the future, no one of you will move without definite orders, and I will apply strict military law to any who disobey.”

They were all greatly ashamed and retired to their quarters. In this fight, the losses of Wei were very heavy, not only in soldiers, but in horses and weapons.

Zhuge Liang led his victorious army to their camp. He intended to advance again, when a messenger arrived from Capital Chengdu with the sad news that Zhang Bao had died. When they told Zhuge Liang he uttered a great cry, blood gushed from his mouth and he fell in a swoon. He was raised and taken to his tent, but he was too ill to march and had to keep his bed. His generals were much grieved.



A later poet sang:

Fierce and valiant was Zhang Bao,
Striving hard to make a name;
Sad the gods should interfere
And withhold a hero's fame!
Zhuge Liang wept his end
In the western winds blowing.
For he knew the warrior gone,
This grieving is beyond knowing.



Zhuce Liang's illness continued. Ten days later he summoned to his tent Dong Jue and Fan Jian, and said, "I feel void and am too ill to carry on, and the best thing for me is to return into Hanzhong and get well. You are to keep my absence perfectly secret, for Sima Yi will certainly attack if he hears."

Zhuge Liang issued orders to break up the camp that night, and the army retired into Hanzhong forthwith. Sima Yi only heard of it five days later, and he knew that again he had been outwitted.

"The man appears like a god and disappears like a demon. He is too much for me," sighed Sima Yi.

Sima Yi set certain generals over the camp and placed others to guard the commanding positions, and he also marched homeward.

As soon as the Shu army was settled in Hanzhong, Zhuge Liang went to Chengdu for treatment. The officials of all ranks came to greet him and escort him to his palace. The Latter Ruler also came to inquire after his

condition and sent his own physicians to treat him. So gradually, he recovered.

In Beginning Prosperity, eighth year and seventh month (AD 230), Cao Zhen, the Grand Commander in Wei, had recovered, and he sent a memorial to his master, saying:

“Shu has invaded more than once and threatened Changan. If this state be not destroyed, it will ultimately be our ruin. The autumn coolness is now here. The army is in good form, and it is the time most favorable for an attack on Shu. I desire to take Sima Yi as colleague and march into Hanzhong to exterminate this wretched horde and free the borders from trouble.”

Personally, the Ruler of Wei approved, but he consulted Liu Ye, saying, “Cao Zhen proposes an attack on Shu. How about that?”

Liu Ye replied, “The Grand Commander speaks well. If that state be not destroyed, it will be to our hurt. Your Majesty should give effect to his desire.”

The Ruler of Wei nodded.

When Liu Ye went home, a crowd of officers flocked to inquire, saying, “We heard the Emperor has consulted you about an expedition against Shu. What think you?”

“No such thing,” said Liu Ye. “Shu is too difficult a country to invade. It would be a mere waste of people and weapons.”

They left him. Then Yang Jin went into the Emperor and said, “It is said that yesterday Liu Ye advised Your Majesty to fall upon Shu. Today,

when we talked with him, he said Shu could not be attacked. This is treating Your Majesty with indignity, and you should issue a command to punish him.”

Wherefore, Cao Rui called in Liu Ye and asked him to explain.

Liu Ye replied, “I have studied the details. Shu cannot be attacked.”

Cao Rui laughed.

In a short time, Yang Jin left.

Then Liu Ye said, “Yesterday, I advised Your Majesty to attack Shu. That being a matter of state policy should be divulged to no person. The essential of a military move is secrecy.”

Then Cao Rui understood, and thereafter Liu Ye was held in greater consideration.

Ten days later, Sima Yi came to court, and Cao Zhen’s memorial was shown him.

Sima Yi replied, “The moment is opportune. I do not think there is any danger from Wu.”

Cao Zhen was created Minister of War, General Who Conquers the West, and Commander-in-Chief of the Western Expedition; Sima Yi was made Grand Commander, General Who Conquers the West, and was second in command; and Liu Ye was made Instructor of the Army. These three then left the court, and the army of four hundred thousand troops marched to Changan, intending to dash to Saber Pass and attack Hanzhong. The army was joined by Guo Huai and Sun Li.

The defenders of Hanzhong brought the news to Zhuge Liang, then quite recovered and engaged in training his army and elaborating the “Eight Arrays.” All was in an efficient state and ready for an attack on Changan.

When Zhuge Liang heard of the intended attack, he called up Zhang Ni and Wang Ping and gave orders: "You are to lead one thousand troops to Chencang and garrison that road so as to check the Wei army."

The two replied, "It is said the Wei army numbers four hundred thousand, though they pretend to have eight hundred thousand. But they are very numerous, and a thousand troops is a very small force to meet them."

Zhuce Liang replied, "I would give you more, but I fear to make it hard for the soldiers. If there be a failure, I shall not hold you responsible. I send you thus; you may be sure there is a meaning in it. I observed the stars yesterday, and I see there will be a tremendous rain this month. The army of Wei may consist of any number of legions, but they will be unable to penetrate into a mountainous country. So there is no need to send a large force. You will come to no harm, and I shall lead the main body into Hanzhong and rest for a month while the enemy retreats. Then, I shall smite them. My strong army needs only one hundred thousand to defeat their worn four hundred thousand. Do not say any more, but get off quickly."

This satisfied Wang Ping and Zhang Ni, and they left, while Zhuge Liang led the main body out toward Hanzhong. Moreover, every station was ordered to lay in a stock of wood and straw and grain enough for a whole month's use, ready against the autumn rains. A month's holiday was given, and food and clothing were issued in advance. The expedition was postponed for the present.

When Cao Zhen and Sima Yi approached Chencang and entered the city, they could not find a single house.

They questioned some of the people near, who said, “Zhuge Liang had burned everything before he left.”

Then Cao Zhen proposed to advance along the road, but Sima Yi opposed, saying that the stars foretold much rain.

“I have watched the Heaven, and the stars’ movement signals long rains. If we get deep in a difficult country and are always victorious, it is all very well. But if we lose, we shall not get out again. Better remain in this city and build what shelter we can against the rains.”

Cao Zhen followed his advice. In the middle of the month, the rain began and came down in a deluge so that the surrounding country was three feet under water. The equipment of the soldiers was soaked, and the soldiers themselves could get no place to sleep. For a whole month, the rain continued. The horses could not be fed, and the soldiers grumbled incessantly. They sent to Luoyang, and the Ruler of Wei himself ceremonially prayed for fine weather, but with no effect.

Minister Wang Su sent up a memorial:

“The histories say that when supplies have to be conveyed a long distance, the soldiers are starved; if they have to gather brushwood before they can cook, then the army is not full-fed. This applies to ordinary expeditions in an ordinary country. If, in addition, the army has to march through a difficult country and roads have to be cut, the labor is doubled. Now, this expedition is hindered by rain and steep and slippery hills; movement is cramped and supplies can only be maintained with difficulty. All is most unpropitious to the army.

“Cao Zhen has been gone over a month and has only got half through the valley. Road-making is monopolizing all energies, and the

fighting soldiers have to work on them. The state of affairs is the opposite of ideal, and the fighting soldiers dislike it.

“I may quote certain parallels. King Wu of Zhou attacked the last king of Shang Dynasty; he went through the pass, but returned. In recent times, Emperors Cao and Pi, attacking Sun Quan, reached the river, and went no farther. Did they not recognize limitations and act accordingly? I pray Your Majesty remember the grave difficulties caused by the rain and put an end to this expedition. By and by, another occasion will arise for using force, and in the joy of overcoming difficulties the people will forget death.”

The Ruler of Wei could not make up his mind, but two other memorials by Yang Fu and Hua Xin followed, and then he issued the command to return, which was sent to Cao Zhen and Sima Yi.

Cao Zhen and Sima Yi had already discussed the abandonment of the expedition.

Cao Zhen had said, “We have had rain for a whole month, and the soldiers are downhearted and think only of getting home again. How can we stop them?”

Sima Yi replied, “Return is best.”

“If Zhuge Liang pursue, how shall we repulse him?”

“We can leave an ambush.”

While they were discussing this matter, the Emperor’s command arrived. Whereupon, they faced about and marched homeward.

Now Zhuge Liang had reckoned upon this month of rain and so had had his troops camped in a safe place. Then he ordered the main army to assemble at Red Slope and camp there.

He summoned his officers to his tent and said, "In my opinion, the enemy must retire, for the Ruler of Wei will issue such an order. To retreat needs preparation, and if we pursue, we will fall in their trap. So we will let them retire without molestation. Some other plan must be evolved."

So when Wang Ping sent news of the retreat of the enemy, the messenger carried back the order not to pursue.

It is only lost labor to cover retreat
When your enemy does not pursue.

By what means Zhuge Liang intended to defeat Wei will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIII

CHAPTER 100

RAIDING A CAMP, THE SHU SOLDIERS DEFEAT CAO ZHEN; CONTESTING
ARRAY BATTLES, ZHUGE LIANG SHAMES SIMA YI.

When the Shu officers got to know that the Wei army had gone but they were not to pursue, they were inclined to discontent and went in a body to the Prime Minister's tent and said, "The rain has driven the enemy away. Surely it is the moment to pursue."

Zhuge Liang replied, "Sima Yi is an able leader who would not retreat without leaving an ambush to cover it. If we pursue we shall fall victims. Let him go in peace, and I shall then get through the Xie Valley and take Qishan, making use of the enemy's lack of defense."

"But there are other ways of taking Changan," said they. "Why only take Qishan?"

"Because Qishan is the first step to Changan, and I want to gain the advantage of position. And every transportation from the West Valley Land must come this way. It rests on River Wei in front and is backed by the Xie Valley. It gives the greatest freedom of movement and is a natural maneuvering ground. That is why I want it."

They bowed to his wisdom.

Then Zhuge Liang dispatched Wei Yan, Zhang Ni, Du Qiong, and Chen Shi for Ji Valley; and he sent Ma Dai, Wang Ping, Zhang Yi, and Ma Zhong for the Xie Valley. All were to meet at the Qishan Mountains. He led the main army himself, with Guan Xing and Liao Hua in the van.

When the Wei army retreated, Cao Zhen and Sima Yi remained in the rear, superintending the movement. They sent a reconnoitering party along the old road to Chencang, and they returned saying no enemy was to be seen. Ten days later, the leaders, who had commanded in the ambush, joined the main body saying that they had seen no sign of the enemy.

Cao Zhen said, "This continuous autumn rain has rendered all the plank trails impassable. How could the soldiers of Shu know of our retreat?"

"They will appear later," said Sima Yi.

"How can you know?"

"These late five dry days they have not pursued because they think we shall have left a rearguard in ambush. Therefore they have let us get well away. But after we have gone, they will try to occupy Qishan."

Cao Zhen was not convinced.

"Why do you doubt?" asked Sima Yi. "I think Zhuge Liang will certainly advance by way of the two valleys, and you and I should guard the entrances. I give them ten days, and if they do not appear, I will come to your camp painted in the face to own my mistake."

"If the army of Shu do appear, I will give you the girdle and the steed that the Emperor gave me," replied Cao Zhen.

And they split their force, Cao Zhen taking up his station on the west of Qishan in the Xie Valley, and Sima Yi going to the east in the Ji Valley.

As soon as the camp was settled, Sima Yi led a cohort into hiding in the valley. The remainder of the force was placed in detachments on the chief roads.

Sima Yi disguised himself as a soldier and went among the soldiers to get a private survey of all the camps.

In one of them, he happened upon a junior officer who was complaining, saying, "The rain has drenched us for days, and they would not retire. Now they have camped here for a wager. They have no pity for us soldiers."

Sima Yi returned to his tent and assembled his officers.

Hauling out the grumbler, Sima Yi said to him, angrily, "The state feeds and trains soldiers a thousand days for one hour's service. How dare you give vent to your spleen to the detriment of discipline?"

The man would not confess, so his comrades were called to bear witness. Still he would not own up.

"I am not here for a wager, but to overcome Shu," said Sima Yi. "Now you all have done well and are going home, but only this fellow complains and is guilty of mutinous conduct."

Sima Yi ordered the lictors to put him to death, and in a short time they produced his head.

The others were terrified, but Sima Yi said, "All you must do your utmost to guard against the enemy. When you hear a bomb explode, rush out on all sides and attack."

With this order, they retired.

Now Wei Yan, Zhang Ni, Chen Shi, and Du Qiong, with twenty thousand troops, entered the Ji Valley. As they were marching, Adviser Deng Zhi came.

“I bear an order from the Prime Minister. As you go out of the valley, beware of the enemy,” said Deng Zhi.

Chen Shi said, “Why is the Prime Minister so full of doubts? We know the soldiers of Wei have suffered severely from the rain and must hasten home. They will not lay any ambush. We are doing double marches and shall gain a great victory. Why are we to delay?”

Deng Zhi replied, “You know the Prime Minister’s plans always succeed. How dare you disobey his orders?”

Chen Shi smiled, saying, “If he was really so resourceful, we should not have lost Jieting.”

Wei Yan, recalling that Zhuge Liang had rejected his plan, also laughed, and said, “If he had listened to me and gone out through Ziwu Valley, not only Changan but Luoyang, too, would be ours. Now, he is bent on taking Qishan. What is the good of it? He gave us the order to advance, and now he stops us. Truly, the orders are confusing.”

Then, said Chen Shi, “I will tell you what I will do. I shall take only five thousand troops, get through the Ji Valley, and camp at Qishan. Then you will see how ashamed the Prime Minister will look.”

Deng Zhi argued and persuaded, but to no avail: the willful leader hurried on to get out of the valley. Deng Zhi could only return as quickly as possible and report.

Chen Shi proceeded. He had gone a few miles when he heard a bomb, and he was in an ambush. He tried to withdraw, but the valley was full of the enemy and he was surrounded as in an iron cask. All his efforts to get out failed. Then there was a shout, and Wei Yan came to the rescue. Wei Yan saved his comrade, but Chen Shi’s five thousand troops were reduced to about five hundred, and these wounded. The Wei soldiers pursued, but

two other divisions of Zhang Ni and Du Qiong prevented the pursuit, and finally the army of Wei retired.

Chen Shi and Wei Yan, who had criticized Zhuge Liang's powers of prevision, no longer doubted that he saw very clearly. They regretted their own shortsightedness.

When Deng Zhi told his chief of the bad behavior of Chen Shi and Wei Yan, Zhuge Liang only laughed.

Said he, "Wei Yan has been disposed to disobey and resent. However, I value his valor and dedication, and so I have employed him. But he will do real harm some day."

Then came a messenger, who reported, "Chen Shi had fallen into an ambush and lost more than four thousand troops. He has led his remaining five hundred horsemen back to the gorge."

Zhuce Liang sent Deng Zhi back again to Ji Valley to console Chen Shi and so keep him from actual mutiny.

Then Zhuge Liang called to his tent Ma Dai and Wang Ping, and said, "If there are any troops of Wei in the Xie Valley, you are to go across the mountains, marching by night and concealing yourselves by day, and make for the east of Qishan. When you arrive, make a fire as a signal."

Next, he gave orders to Ma Zhong and Zhang Ni, saying, "You are to follow the byroads to the west of Qishan. You are also to march by night and conceal by day. Then you are to join up with Ma Dai and Wang Ping. The four of you shall make a joint attack on Cao Zhen's camp. I shall lead the army through the valley and attack the camp in the center."

After the four Generals left, Guan Xing and Liao Hua also received secret orders.

The armies marched rapidly. Not long after starting, two other detachments led by Hu Ban and Wu Yi received secret orders and left the main body.

Doubts about the coming of the Shu army made Cao Zhen careless, and he allowed his soldiers to become slack and rest. He only thought of getting through the allotted ten days, when he would have the laugh against his colleague.

Seven of the days had passed when a scout reported a few odd men of Shu in the valley. Cao Zhen sent Qin Liang with five thousand troops to reconnoiter and keep them at a distance.

Qin Liang led his troops to the entrance of the valley. As soon as he arrived, the enemy retired. Qin Liang went after them, but they had disappeared. He was perplexed and puzzled, and while trying to decide, he told the troops to dismount and rest.

But almost immediately he heard a shout, and ambushing troops appeared in front of him. He jumped on his horse to look about him, and saw a great cloud of dust rising among the hills. He disposed his troops for defense, but the shouting quickly came nearer, and then Hu Ban and Wu Yi appeared advancing towards him. Retreat was impossible, for Guan Xing and Liao Hua had blocked the road.

The hills were on both sides, and from the hilltops came shouts of "Dismount and yield!"

More than half did surrender. Qin Liang rode out to fight, but he was slain by Liao Hua.

Zhuge Liang put the Wei soldiers who had come over to his side in one of the rear divisions. With their dress and arms, he disguised five thousand of his own troops so that they looked like his enemies, and then he sent this division—under Guan Xing, Liao Hua, Wu Yi, and Hu Ban—to raid Cao Zhen's camp. Before they reached the camp, they sent one of their number ahead as a galloper to tell Cao Zhen that there had been only a few men of Shu and they had all been chased out of sight, and so lull him into security.

This news satisfied Cao Zhen.

But just then, a trusty messenger from Sima Yi came with a message: "Our troops have fallen into an ambush, and many have been killed. Do not think any more about the wager; that is canceled. But take most careful precautions."

"But there is not a single soldier of Shu near," said Cao Zhen.

He told the messenger to go back. Just then, they told him Qin Liang's army had returned, and he went out to meet them. Just as he got near, someone remarked that some torches had flared up in the rear of his camp. He hastened thither to see. As soon as he was out of sight, the four leaders waved on their troops and dashed up to the camp. At the same time, Ma Dai and Wang Ping came up behind, and Ma Zhong and Zhang Yi came out.

The soldiers of Wei were trapped and helpless. They scattered and fled for life. Cao Zhen, protected by his generals, fled away eastward. The enemy chased them closely.

As Cao Zhen fled, there arose a great shouting, and up came an army at full speed. Cao Zhen thought all was lost, and his heart sank, but it was Sima Yi, who drove off the pursuers.

Though Cao Zhen was saved, he was almost too ashamed to show his face.

Then said Sima Yi, “Zhuge Liang has seized Qishan, and we cannot remain here. Let us go to River Wei, whence we may try to recover our lost ground.”

“How did you know I was in danger of defeat?” asked Cao Zhen.

“My messenger told me that you said there was not a single soldier of Shu near, and I knew Zhuge Liang would try to seize your camp. So I came to your help. The enemy’s plan succeeded, but we will say no more about that wager. We must both do our best for the country.”

But the fright and excitement made Cao Zhen ill, and he took to his bed. And while the army were in such a state of disorder, Sima Yi was afraid to advise a return. They camped at River Wei.

After this adventure, Zhuge Liang hastened back to Qishan. After the soldiers had been feasted and services recognized, the four discontented leaders—Wei Yan, Chen Shi, Du Qiong, and Zhang Ni—came to the tent to apologize.

“Who caused the loss?” said Zhuge Liang.

Wei Yan said, “Chen Shi disobeyed orders and rushed into the valley.”

“Wei Yan told me to,” said Chen Shi.

“Would you still try to drag him down after he rescued you?” said Zhuge Liang. “However, when orders have been disobeyed, it is useless to try and gloze it over.”

Zhuce Liang sentenced Chen Shi to death, and he was led away. Soon, they brought his head into the presence of the assembled generals. Zhuge Liang spared Wei Yan, as there was yet work for him to accomplish.

After this, Zhuge Liang prepared to advance. The scouts reported that Cao Zhen was ill, but was being treated by doctors in his tent.

The news pleased Zhuge Liang, and he said to his officers, "If Cao Zhen's illness is slight, they will surely return to Changan. They must be delayed by his serious sickness. He stays on so that his soldiers may not lose heart. Now, I will write him such a letter that he will die."

Then he called up the soldiers of Wei who had yielded, and said to them, "You are Wei troops, and your families are all over there; it is wrong for you to serve me. Suppose I let you go home?"

They thanked him, falling prostrate and weeping.

Then, Zhuge Liang continued, "Friend Cao Zhen and I have a compact, and I have a letter for him which you shall take. The bearer will be well rewarded."

They received the letter and ran home to their own tents, where they gave their Commander-in-Chief the letter. Cao Zhen was too ill to rise, but he opened the cover and read:

"The Prime Minister of Han, Zhuge Liang, to the Minister of War, Cao Zhen:

"You will permit me to say that a leader of an army should be able to go and come, to be facile and obdurate, to advance and retire, to show himself weak or strong, to be immovable as mountains, to be inscrutable as the operations of nature, to be infinite as the universe, to be everlasting as the blue void, to be vast as the ocean, to be dazzling as the lights of heaven, to foresee droughts and floods, to know the nature of the ground, to understand the possibilities of battle arrays, to conjecture the excellencies and defects of the enemy.

“Alas! One of your sort, ignorant and inferior, rising impudently in Heaven’s vault, has had the presumption to assist a rebel to assume the imperial style and state at Luoyang, to send some miserable soldiers into Xie Valley. There they happened upon drenching rain. The difficult roads wearied both soldiers and horses, driving them frantic. Weapons and armors littered the countryside, swords and spears covered the ground. You, the Commander-in-Chief, were heartbroken and cowed, your generals fled like rats. You dare not show your faces at home, nor can you enter the halls of state. The historians’ pens will record your defeats; the people will recount your infamies: ‘Sima Yi is frightened when he hears of battlefronts, Cao Zhen is alarmed at mere rumors.’ My soldiers are fierce and their steeds strong; my great generals are eager as tigers and majestic as dragons. I shall sweep the Middle Land bare and make Wei desolate.”

Cao Zhen’s wrath rose as he read. At the end, it filled his breast. And he died that evening. Sima Yi sent his coffin to Luoyang on a wagon.

When the Ruler of Wei heard of the death of Cao Zhen, he issued an edict urging Sima Yi to prosecute the war, to raise a great army, and to fight with Zhuge Liang.

Sima Yi sent a declaration of war one day in advance, and Zhuge Liang replied that he would fight on the morrow.

After the envoy had left, Zhuge Liang said, “Cao Zhen must have died!”

He called Jiang Wei by night to receive secret orders. He also summoned Guan Xing and told him what to do.

Next morning, the whole force marched to the bank of River Wei and took up a position in a wide plain, with the river on one flank and hills on the other. The two armies saluted each other's appearance with heavy flights of arrows. After the drums had rolled thrice, the Wei center opened at the great standard and Sima Yi appeared, followed by his officers. Opposite was Zhuge Liang, in a four-horse chariot, waving his feather fan.

Sima Yi addressed Zhuge Liang, "Our master's ascension of the Throne was after the manner of King Yao, who abdicated in favor of King Shun. Two emperors have succeeded and have their seat in the Middle Land. Because of his liberality and graciousness, my lord has suffered the rule of Shu and Wu, lest the people should suffer in a struggle.

"You, who are but a plowman from Nanyang, ignorant of the ways of Heaven, wish to invade us, and you should be destroyed. But if you will examine your heart and repent of your fault and retire, then each may maintain his own borders, and a settled state of three kingdoms will be attained. Thus the people may be spared distress, and you will save your life."

Zhugge Liang smiled and replied, "Our First Ruler entrusted to me the custody of his orphan son. Think you that I shall fail to exert myself to the uttermost to destroy rebels against his authority? Your soldiers of the Cao family will soon be exterminated by Han. Your ancestors were servants of Han and for generations ate of their bounty. Yet, instead of giving grateful service, you assist usurpers. Are you not ashamed?"

The flush of shame spread over Sima Yi's face, but he replied, "We will try the test of battle. If you can conquer, I pledge myself to be no

longer a leader of armies. But if you are defeated, then you will retire at once to your own village and I will not harm you.”

“Do you desire a contest of generals, or of weapons, or of battle arrays?” asked Zhuge Liang.

“Let us try a contest of battle arrays,” replied Sima Yi.

“Then draw up your array, that I may see,” said Zhuge Liang.

Sima Yi withdrew within the line and signaled to his officers with a yellow flag to draw up their troops. When he had finished, he rode again to the front, saying, “Do you recognize my formation?”

“The least of my generals can do as well,” said Zhuge Liang, smiling. “This is called the ‘Disorder-in-Order’ formation.”

“Now you try while I look on,” said Sima Yi.

Zhuce Liang entered the lines and waved his fan. Then he came out and said, “Do you recognize that?”

“Of course. This is the ‘Eight Arrays.’”

“Yes, you seem to know it. But dare you attack?”

“Why not, since I know it?” replied Sima Yi.

“Then you need only try.”

Sima Yi entered the ranks and called to him three generals—Dai Ling, Zhang Hu, and Yue Chen—to whom he said, “That formation consists of eight gates: Birth, Exit, Expanse, Wound, Fear, Annihilation, Obstacle, and Death. You will go in from the east at the Gate of Birth, turn to the southwest and make your way out by the Gate of Annihilation. Then enter at the north, at the Exit Gate, and the formation will be broken up. But be cautious.”

They started with Zhang Hu leading, Dai Ling next, and Yue Chen in rear, each with thirty horsemen. They made their way in at the Gate of Birth

amid the applause of both sides. But when they had got within, they found themselves facing a wall of troops and could not find a way out. They hastily led their men round by the base of the line toward the southwest to rush out there. But they were stopped by a flight of arrows. They became confused and saw many gates, but they had lost their bearings. Nor could they aid each other. They dashed hither and thither in disorder, but the formation was as if gathering clouds and rolling mists. Then a shout arose, and each one was seized and bound.

They were taken to the center, where Zhuge Liang sat in his tent, and the three leaders with their ninety men were ranged in front.

“Indeed you are prisoners. Are you surprised?” said Zhuge Liang, smiling. “But I will set you free to return to your leader, and tell him to read his books again, and study his tactics, before he comes to try conclusions with me. You are pardoned, but leave your weapons and horses here.”

So they were stripped of their arms and armors and their faces inked. Thus were they led on foot out of the array. Sima Yi lost his temper at sight of his people thus put to shame.

Said he, “After this disgrace, how can I face the other officers in the Middle Land?”

He gave the signal for the army to fall on and attack the enemy, and, grasping his sword, led his brave generals into the fray and commanded the attack. But just as the two armies came to blows, Guan Xing came up from the southwest, his drums rolling and troops shouting, and attacked. Sima Yi told off a division from the rear to oppose Guan Xing, and again turned to urge on his main body.

Then the army of Wei was thrown into confusion by another attack from Jiang Wei, who came up silently and joined in the battle. Thus, three sides of the Wei army were attacked by three different divisions of the

enemy, and Sima Yi decided to retire. However, this was difficult. The soldiers of Shu hemmed him in and came closer every moment. At last, by a desperate push, he cut an alley toward the south and freed his army. But he had lost six or seven out of every ten of his soldiers.

The Wei army withdrew to the south bank of River Wei and camped. They strengthened their position and remained entirely on the defensive.

Zhuge Liang mustered his victorious army and returned to Qishan.

Now Li Yan sent an officer, General Gou An, from Baidicheng with a convoy of grain. Gou An was a drunkard and loitered on the road so that he arrived ten days late.

Zhuge Liang, angry at the delay, upbraided him, saying, "This grain is of the utmost importance to the army, and you delay it. Three days' delay ought to mean the death penalty. What can you say to this delay of ten?"

Gou An was sentenced to death and hustled out.

But Yang Yi ventured to intervene, saying, "Gou An is a servant of Li Yan, and Li Yan has sent large supplies of all sorts from the West River Land. The road is long and difficult. If you put this man to death, perhaps others will not undertake transport duty."

Zhuge Liang then bade the executioners loose the offender, give him eighty blows, and let him go.

This punishment filled Gou An's heart with bitter resentment, and, in the night, he deserted to the enemy, he and his half-dozen personal staff. He was taken before Sima Yi and told the tale of his wrongs.

“Your tale may be true, but it is hard to trust it,” said Sima Yi. “Zhuge Liang is full of guile. However, you may render me a service, and if you do, I will ask the Ruler of Wei that you may be allowed to serve him and obtain a post for you.”

“Whatever you ask, I will do the best I can,” replied the deserter.

“Then go to Chengdu and spread a lying report that Zhuge Liang is angry with the powers there and means to make himself emperor. This will get him recalled, and that will be a merit to you.”

Gou An accepted the treacherous mission. In Chengdu, he got hold of the eunuchs and told them his false tale that the Prime Minister was too proud of his services and was about to use his sweeping powers to usurp the Throne.

The eunuchs became alarmed for their own safety and told the Emperor all these things.

“In such a case, what am I to do?” asked the Latter Ruler.

“Recall him to the capital,” said the eunuchs, “and take away his military powers so that he cannot rebel.”

The Latter Ruler issued an edict recalling the army.

But Jiang Wan stepped forward and said, “The Prime Minister has rendered many great services since he led out the army. Wherefore is he recalled?”

“I have a private matter to consult him about,” said the Latter Ruler. “I must see him personally.”

So the edict was issued and sent to Zhuge Liang. The messenger was at once received as soon as he reached Qishan.

“The Emperor is young, and there is some jealous person by his side,” said Zhuge Liang sadly. “I was just going to achieve some solid success.

Why am I recalled? If I go not, I shall insult my Prince. If I retire, I shall never get such a chance again.”

“If the army retire, Sima Yi will attack,” said Jiang Wei.

“I will retire in five divisions. Thus today, this camp goes. Supposing that there are a thousand soldiers in the camp, then I shall have two thousand cooking places prepared, or if there are three thousand soldiers, then four thousand cooking plates shall be got ready, and so on, increasing the cooking arrangements as the troops are sent away.”

Yang Yi said, “In the days of old, when Sun Bin was attacking Pang Juan, Sun Bin decreased the cooking arrangements as the soldiers were increased. Why do you reverse this, O Prime Minister?”

“Because Sima Yi is an able leader and would pursue if he knew we were retreating. But he would recognize the probability of an ambush, and if he sees an increase in the cooking arrangements in a camp, he will be unable to conclude whether the troops have gone or not, and he will not pursue. Thus I shall gradually withdraw without loss.”

The order for retreat was given.

Confident of the effect that Gou An’s lying report would produce, Sima Yi waited for the retreat of the Shu army to begin. He was still waiting when the scouts told him the enemy’s camps were empty. Wishing to make sure, he rode out himself with a small reconnoitering party and inspected the empty camps. Then he bade them count the stoves. Next day, he paid a second visit to another empty camp, and again the cooking stoves were counted. The count showed an increase of a half.

“I felt sure that Zhuge Liang would have more troops ready. He has increased the cooking arrangements, and so, if we pursue, he will be ready for us. No! We also will retire and await another opportunity.”

So there was no pursuit, and Zhuge Liang did not lose a soldier on his retreat to Hanzhong.

By and by, people came in from the River Lands to say that the retreat was a fact, and that only the cooking arrangements had been increased, not the soldiers.

Sima Yi knew that he had been tricked, and looking up the sky, he sighed, “Zhuge Liang imitated the ruse of Sun Bin to rouse my suspicion. His thinking is superior to mine.”

And Sima Yi set out for Changan.

When players of equal skill are matched,
Then victory hovers between;
Perhaps your opponent's a genius,
So put on your lowliest mien.

What happened when Zhuge Liang returned to Chengdu will be told next.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIII

CHAPTER 101

GOING OUT FROM LONGSHANG, ZHUGE LIANG DRESSES AS A GOD;
DASHING TOWARD SABER PASS, ZHANG HE FALLS INTO A SNARE.

By means of the artifice just described, Zhuge Liang withdrew his army safely into Hanzhong, while Sima Yi retreated upon Changan. Zhuge Liang distributed the rewards for success and then went to Capital Chengdu for audience.

“Your Majesty recalled me just as I was about to advance upon Changan. What is the important matter?” said the Prime Minister.

For a long time, the Latter Ruler made no reply.

Presently, he said, “I longed to see your face once more, that is the only reason.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “I think my recall was not on your own initiative. Some slanderous person has hinted that I cherished ulterior objects.”

The Latter Ruler, who indeed felt guilty and ill at ease, made no reply.

Zhuge Liang continued, “Your late father laid me under an obligation which I am pledged to fulfill to the death. But if vile influences are permitted to work at home, how can I destroy the rebels without?”

“The fact is I recalled you because of the talk of the eunuchs. But I understand now and am unutterably sorry,” said the Latter Ruler.

Zhuge Liang interrogated the eunuchs and thus found out the base rumors that had been spread abroad by Gou An. He sent to arrest this man, but Gou An had already fled and gone over to Wei. The eunuchs who had

influenced the Emperor were put to death, and all the other eunuchs who were involved were expelled from the Palace.

The Prime Minister also upbraided Jiang Wan and Fei Yi for not having looked into the matter and set the Son of Heaven right. The two Ministers bowed their heads and admitted their fault.

Zhuge Liang then took leave of the Latter Ruler and returned to the army. He wrote to Li Yan to see to the necessary supplies and began preparations for a new expedition.

Yang Yi said, “The soldiers are wearied by the many expeditions, and the supplies are not regular. I think a better plan would be to send half the army to Qishan for three months, and at the end of that time exchange them for the other half, and so on alternately. For example, if you have two hundred thousand troops, let one hundred thousand go into the field and one hundred thousand remain. In this way, using ten legions and ten legions, their energies will be conserved and you can gradually work toward the Middle Land.”

“I agree with you,” said Zhuge Liang. “Our attack is not a matter to be achieved in haste. The suggestion for an extended campaign is excellent!”

Wherefore the army was divided, and each half went out for one hundred days’ service at a time, when it was relieved by the other half. Full penalties were provided for any laxity and failure to maintain the periods of active service.

In the spring of the ninth year of Beginning Prosperity, the Shu army once more took the field against Wei. In Wei, it was the fifth year of Calm Peace (AD 231).

When the Ruler of Wei heard of this new expedition, he called Sima Yi and asked his advice.

“Now that my friend Cao Zhen is no more, I am willing to do all that one man can to destroy the rebels against Your Majesty’s authority,” said Sima Yi.

Cao Rui was gratified by this ready offer, and honored Sima Yi with a banquet. Next day, an edict was issued for the army to move. The Ruler of Wei, riding in his state chariot, escorted Sima Yi out of the city, and, after the farewells, Sima Yi took the road to Changan, where the force was gathering. There was assembled a council of war.

Zhang He offered his services, saying, “I volunteer to guard Yongcheng and Meicheng against the Shu army.”

But Sima Yi said, “Our vanguard army is not strong enough to face the enemy’s whole force. Moreover, to divide an army is not generally a successful scheme. The better plan will be to leave a guard in Shanggui and send all the others to Qishan. Will you undertake the Leadership of the Van?”

Zhang He consented, saying, “I have always been most loyal and will devote my energies entirely to the service of the state. So far, I have not had an adequate opportunity to prove my sincerity. But now that you confer upon me a post of such responsibility, I can only say that no sacrifice can be too great for me, and I will do my utmost.”

So Zhang He was appointed Van Leader, and then Guo Huai was set over the defense of the counties of the West Valley Land. Other generals were distributed to other posts, and the march began toward Qishan.

The spies reported: “The main force of Shu is directed toward Qishan, and the Leaders of the Van are Wang Ping and Zhang Ni. The route chosen

for their march is from Chencang, across San Pass, and to the Xie Valley.”

Hearing this, Sima Yi said to Zhang He, “Zhuge Liang is advancing in great force and certainly intends to reap the wheat in the West Valley Land for his supply. You get sufficient troops to hold Qishan, while Guo Huai and I go to Tianshui and foil the enemy’s plan to gather the wheat.”

So Zhang He took forty thousand troops to hold Qishan, and Sima Yi set out westwards to the West Valley Land.

When Zhuge Liang reached Qishan and had settled his army in camp, he saw that the bank of River Wei had been fortified by his enemy.

“That must be the work of Sima Yi,” remarked Zhuge Liang to his generals. “But we have not enough food in camp. I have written to Li Yan to send grain, but it has not yet arrived. The wheat in the West Valley Land is now just ripe, and we will go and reap it.”

Leaving Wang Ping, Zhang Ni, Hu Ban, and Wu Yi to guard for the camps, Zhuge Liang, with Wei Yan, Jiang Wei, and several other generals, went over to Lucheng. The Governor of that city knew he could not offer any real defense, so he opened the gates and yielded.

After calming the people, Zhuge Liang asked, “Where is the ripe wheat to be found?”

The Governor replied, “Longshang is the place.”

So Zhang Yi and Ma Zhong were left to guard the city, and the remainder of the army went to Longshang.

But soon, the leading body returned to say, “Sima Yi has already occupied that city.”

“He guessed what I intended to do!” said Zhuge Liang, taken aback.

Zhuce Liang then retired, bathed, and put on another dress. Next, he bade them bring out three four-wheeled chariots, all exactly alike, that were among the impedimenta of the army. They had been built in Shu some time before.

Jiang Wei was told off to lead a thousand troops as escort for one chariot, and five hundred drummers were appointed to accompany it. The chariot, with its escort and drummers, was sent away behind the city. In like manner, two other chariots were equipped and sent east and west of the city under Ma Dai and Wei Yan. Each chariot was propelled by a team of twenty-four men, all dressed in black, barefooted, and with loosened hair. Each one of the team also had in hand a sword and a black, seven-starred flag.

While the chariots were taking up their positions, thirty thousand soldiers were ordered to prepare wagons and sickles to cut and carry away the grain.

Next, Zhuge Liang selected twenty-four good soldiers, whom he dressed and armed like those sent away with the three chariots. These were to push his own chariot. Guan Xing was told to dress up as the God of Clouds and to walk in front of Zhuge Liang’s chariot, holding a black, seven-starred flag. These preparations complete, Zhuge Liang mounted, and the chariot took the road toward the Wei camp.

The appearance of a chariot with such attendants more than startled the enemy’s scouts, who did not know whether the apparition was that of a human or a demon. They hastened to their commander and told him.

Sima Yi came out himself and saw the cavalcade and its central figure’s being Zhuge Liang, dressed as a Daoist mystic, with headdress, white robe, and a feather fan. Around the chariot were twenty-four hair-

loosened beings, each with a sword in hand, and leading was a heaven-sent god with the seven-starred flag.

“Some of Zhuge Liang’s odd doings,” said he. And Sima Yi ordered two thousand troops, saying, “Chase as fast as you can, and bring in the chariot, escort, and the seated figure.”

The soldiers went out to do their bidding. But as soon as they appeared, the chariot retired and took a road leading to the Shu camp. Although the Wei soldiers were mounted, they could not come up with the cavalcade. What they did meet with was a chilly breeze and a cold mist that rolled about them.

They found it uncanny and halted, saying one to another, “How extraordinary it is that we have been pressing on and yet we got no nearer. What does it mean?”

When Zhuge Liang saw that the pursuit had ceased, he had his chariot pushed out again to the front and passed within sight of the halted troops. At first, they hesitated, but presently took up the pursuit once more. Whereupon, the chariot again retired, proceeding slowly but always keeping out of reach. And thus more than seven miles were covered and the chariot was still not captured.

Again, the soldiers halted, puzzled and perplexed at this incomprehensible chase. But as soon as they stopped, the chariot came again toward them and they retook pursuit.

Sima Yi now came up with a strong force. But he also halted, and said to his generals, “This Zhuge Liang is a master in the arts of necromancy and juggling and Eight Gates and knows how to call up the Deities of Six Layers to his aid. I know this trick of his: it is the ‘Ground Rolling’ in the *Book of Six Layers Deities*, and it is vain to pursue.”

So they ceased following. But then a roll of drums came from the left side as if a body of troops were approaching. Sima Yi told off some companies to repel them, but there only came into view a small force, and in their midst was a party of men dressed in black, the exact counterpart of the cavalcade he had first sent to pursue. In the chariot sat another Zhuge Liang just like the one that had just disappeared.

“But just now he was sitting in that other chariot, which we chased for fifteen miles. How can he be here?” said Sima Yi.

Shortly after they heard another roll of the drums, and as the sound died away there appeared another body of men, with a chariot in the midst, exactly like the last and also carrying a sitting figure of Zhuge Liang.

“They must be heaven-sent soldiers,” said Sima Yi.

The soldiers were now feeling the strain of these weird appearances and began to get out of hand. They dared not stay to fight such beings, and some ran away. But before they had gone far, lo! another roll of drums, another cohort, and another chariot with a similar figure seated therein.

The soldiers of Wei were now thoroughly frightened, and even Sima Yi himself began to feel doubtful whether these appearances should be ascribed to humans or devils. He realized, however, that he was in the midst of dangers as he did not know the number of the Shu soldiers, and he and his troops ran away helter-skelter, never stopping till they reached Shanggui. They entered the city and closed the gates.

Having thus driven off the Wei soldiers, Zhuge Liang proceeded to reap and gather the wheat in Longshang, which was carried into Lucheng and laid out to dry.

Sima Yi remained shut up within the walls for three days. Then, as he saw his enemies retiring, he sent out some scouts, who presently returned

with a Shu soldier they had captured. The prisoner was questioned.

“I was of the reaping party,” said the man. “They caught me when I was looking for some horses that had strayed.”

“What wonderful soldiers were they of yours that one saw here lately?” asked Sima Yi.

The man replied, “Zhuge Liang was with one party of them; the others were led by Jiang Wei, Ma Dai, and Wei Yan. There were a thousand fighting soldiers with each chariot and five hundred drummers. Zhuge Liang was with the first party.”

“His comings and goings are not human,” said Sima Yi sadly.

Then Guo Huai came, and he was called to a council.

Said Guo Huai, “I hear the soldiers of Shu in Lucheng are very few, and they are occupied with gathering the grain. Why not smite them?”

Sima Yi told him his last experience of his opponent’s wiles.

“He threw dust in your eyes that time,” said Guo Huai with a smile. “However, now you know. What is the good of more talk? Let me attack the rear, while you lead against the front, and we shall take the city and Zhuge Liang, too.”

An attack was decided upon.

In Lucheng, while the soldiers were still busy with the wheat, Zhuge Liang called up his generals, and said, “The enemy will attack tonight. There is a suitable place for an ambush in the newly reaped fields, but who will lead for me?”

Four generals—Jiang Wei, Wei Yan, Ma Dai, and Ma Zhong—offered themselves, and he posted them, each with two thousand troops, outside the four corners of the city. They were to await the signal and then converge. When these had gone, Zhuge Liang led out a small party of one hundred soldiers and hid in the newly reaped fields.

In the meantime, Sima Yi was drawing near. It was dusk when he stood beneath the walls of Lucheng.

Said he to his officers, “If we attacked by daylight, we should find the city well-prepared. So we will take advantage of the darkness. The moat is shallow here, and there shall be no difficulty in crossing it.”

The troops bivouacked till the time should come to attack. About the middle of the first watch, Guo Huai arrived, and his force joined up with the others. This done, the drums began to beat, and the city was quickly surrounded. However, the defenders maintained such a heavy discharge of arrows, bolts, and stones from the walls that the besiegers dared not close in.

Suddenly, from the midst of the Wei army came the roar of a bomb, soon followed by others from different places. The soldiers were startled, but no one could say whence the sounds had proceeded. Guo Huai went to search the wheat fields, and then the four armies from the corners of the city converged upon the Wei army. At the same time, the defenders burst out of the city gates, and a great battle began. Wei lost many troops.

After heavy fighting, Sima Yi extricated his army from the battle and made his way to a hill, which he set about holding and fortifying, while Guo Huai got round to the rear of the city and called a halt.

Zhuge Liang entered the city and sent his troops to camp again at the four corners of the walls.

Guo Huai went to see his chief, and said, "We have long been at grips with these soldiers and are unable to drive them off. We have now lost another fight. Unless something is done, we shall not get away at all."

"What can we do?" asked Sima Yi.

"You might write to Yongzhou and Liangzhou to send their forces to our help. I will try my fortune against Saber Pass and cut off Zhuge Liang's retreat and supplies. That should bring about discontent and mutiny, and we can attack when we see the enemy in confusion."

The letters were sent, and soon Sun Li came leading the troops of Yongzhou and Liangzhou, foot and horse, of two hundred thousand. The new arrivals were sent to help Guo Huai in the attack on Saber Pass.

After many days had passed without sight of the enemy, Zhuge Liang thought it was time to make another move.

Calling up Jiang Wei and Ma Dai, he said, "The soldiers of Wei are well posted on the hills and refuse battle because, firstly, they think that we are short of food, and, secondly, they have sent an army against Saber Pass to cut off our supplies. Now, each of you will take ten thousand troops and garrison the important points about here to show them that we are well prepared to defend ourselves. Then they will retire."

After these two had gone, Yang Yi came to see Zhuge Liang about the change of troops then due.

Yang Yi said, "O Prime Minister, you have ordered the troops to be alternated every one hundred days. Now the time is due, and the replacing troops have already left Hanzhong and dispatches from the leading

divisions have come in. Here we have eighty thousand troops, of which forty will be due for relief.”

“There is the order; carry it out,” replied Zhuge Liang.

So the forty thousand home-going soldiers prepared to withdraw.

Just then came the news: “Sun Li has arrived with reinforcements of two hundred thousand troops from Yongzhou and Liangzhou. Guo Huai and Sun Li have gone to attack Saber Pass, and Sima Yi is leading an army against Lucheng.”

In the face of such important news, Yang Yi went to discuss with Zhuge Liang.

Said Yang Yi, “The Wei army are advancing against our critical points. Should you, O Prime Minister, postpone for a time the withdrawal of the field troops in order to strengthen our defense? You can wait for the new troops to arrive first.”

Zhuce Liang replied, “I must keep faith with the soldiers. Since the order for the periodical exchange of troops has been issued, it must be carried out. Beside, the soldiers due for relief are all prepared to start, their expectations have been roused, and their relatives await them. In the face of yet greater difficulties, I would still let them go.”

So orders were given for the time-expired soldiers to march that day. But when the legionaries heard it, a sudden movement of generosity spread among them.

And they said, “Since the Prime Minister cares for us so much, we do not wish to go, but will prefer to remain to fight the Wei army to death.”

“But you are due for home. You cannot stay here,” said Zhuge Liang.

They reiterated that they all wished to stay instead of going home.

Zhuge Liang was glad and said, "Since you wish to stay and fight with me, you can go out of the city and camp, ready to encounter the army of Wei as soon as they arrive. Do not give them time to rest or recover breath, but attack vigorously at once. You will be fresh and fit, waiting for those flagged with a long march."

So they gripped their weapons and joyfully went out of the city to array themselves in readiness.

Now the Yongzhou and Liangzhou troops had traveled by double marches, and so were worn out and needed rest. But while they were pitching their tents, the troops of Shu fell upon them lustily, leaders full of spirit, soldiers full of energy. The weary soldiers could make no proper stand and retired. The troops of Shu followed, pressing on them till corpses littered the whole plain and blood flowed in runnels.

It was a victory for Zhuge Liang, and he came out to welcome the victors and led them into the city and distributed rewards.

Just then arrived an urgent letter from Li Yan, then at Baidicheng, and when Zhuge Liang had torn it open, he read:

"News has just come that Wu has sent an envoy to Luoyang and entered into an alliance with Wei, whereby Wu is to attack us. The army of Wu has not yet set out, but I am anxiously awaiting your plans."

Doubts and fears crowded in upon Zhuge Liang's mind as he read. He summoned his officers.

"As Wu is coming to invade our land, we shall have to retire quickly," said he. "If I issue orders for the Qishan force to withdraw, Sima Yi will not dare to pursue while we are camped here."

The Qishan force broke camp and marched in two divisions under Wang Ping, Zhang Ni, Hu Ban, and Wu Yi. Zhang He watched them go, but was too fearful of the movement being some ruse to attempt to follow. He went to see Sima Yi.

“The enemy have retired, but I know not for what reason.”

“Zhuge Liang is very crafty, and you will do well to remain where you are and keep a careful lookout. Do nothing till their grain has given out, when they must retire for good,” said Sima Yi.

Here, General Wei Ping stepped forward, saying, “But they are retreating from Qishan. We should seize the occasion of their retreat to smite them. Are they tigers that you fear to move? How the world will laugh at us!”

But Sima Yi was obstinate and ignored the protest.

When Zhuge Liang knew that the Qishan troops had got away safely, he called Yang Yi and Ma Zhong and gave them secret orders to lead ten thousand bowmen and crossbowmen out by the Wooden Path of Saber Pass and place them in ambush on both sides of the road.

Said he, “If the soldiers of Wei pursue, wait till you hear a bomb. When you hear the bomb, at once barricade the road with timber and stones so as to impede them. When they halt, shoot at them with the bows and the crossbows.”

Wei Yan and Guan Xing were told to attack the rear of the enemy.

These orders given, the walls of Lucheng were decorated lavishly with flags, and at various points within the city were piled straw and kindling

wood ready to make some smoke as though there were cooking activities in the city. The soldiers were sent out along the road toward Saber Pass.

The spies of Wei returned to headquarters to report: "A large number of Shu soldiers have left, but we do not know how many remain within the city."

In doubt, Sima Yi went himself to look, and when he saw the smoke rising from within the walls and the fluttering flags, he said, "The city is deserted!"

He sent men in to confirm this, and they said the place was empty.

"Then Zhuge Liang is really gone. Who will pursue?"

"Let me," replied Zhang He.

"You are too impulsive," said Sima Yi.

"I have been Leader of the Van from the first day of this expedition. Why not use me today, when there is work to be done and glory to be gained?"

"Because the utmost caution is necessary. They are retreating, and they will leave an ambush at every possible point."

"I know that, and you need not be afraid."

"Well, you wish to go and may, but whatever happens you must be prepared for."

"A really noble man is prepared to sacrifice self for country. Never mind what happens."

"Then take five thousand troops and start. Wei Ping shall follow with twenty thousand horse- and footmen to deal with any ambush that may discover itself. I will follow later with three thousand to help where need be."

So Zhang He set out and advanced quickly.

Ten miles out, he heard a roll of drums, and suddenly appeared from a wood a cohort led by Wei Yan, who galloped to the front, crying, "Whither would you go, O rebel leader?"

Zhang He swiftly turned and engaged Wei Yan, but after some ten passes, Wei Yan fled. Zhang He rode after Wei Yan along the road for ten miles and then stopped to observe. As he saw no ambush, he turned again and resumed the pursuit. All went well till he came to a slope, when there arose shouts and yells and another body of soldiers came out.

"Zhang He, do not run away!" cried this leader, who was Guan Xing.

Guan Xing galloped close, and Zhang He did not flee. They fought, and after half a score of passes, Guan Xing seemed to have the worst of the encounter and fled. Zhang He followed. Presently, they neared a dense wood. Zhang He was fearful of entering in, so he sent forward scouts to search the thickets. They could find no danger, and Zhang He again pursued.

But quite unexpectedly, Wei Yan, who had formerly fled, got round ahead of Zhang He and now appeared again. The two fought a half-score bouts, and again Wei Yan ran. Zhang He followed, but Guan Xing also got round to the front by a side road and so stopped the pursuit of Zhang He. Zhang He attacked furiously as soon as he was checked, this time so successfully that the troops of Shu threw away their war gear and ran. The road was thus littered with spoil, and the Wei soldiers could not resist the temptation to gather it. They slipped from their horses and began to collect the arms.

The maneuvers just described continued, Wei Yan and Guan Xing one after the other engaging Zhang He, and Zhang He pressing on after each one, but achieving nothing. And as evening fell, the running fight had led both sides close to the Wooden Path.

Then suddenly, Wei Yan made a real stand, and he rode to the front, yelling, "Rebel! I have despised fighting you, but you have kept pursuing me. Now we will fight to the death!"

Zhang He was furious and nothing loath, so he came on with his spear to meet Wei Yan, who was flourishing his sword. They met; yet again, after some ten bouts, Wei Yan threw aside weapons, armor, helmet, and all his gear, and led his defeated company away along the Wooden Path.

Zhang He was filled with the lust to kill, and he could not let Wei Yan escape. So he set out after Wei Yan, although it was already dark. But suddenly, lights appeared and the sky became aglow, and at the same time, huge boulders and great bulks of timber came rolling down the slopes and blocked the way.

Fear gripped Zhang He, and he cried, "I have blundered into an ambush!"

The road was blocked in front and behind and bordered by craggy precipices. Then, rat-tat-tat! came the sound of a rattle, and therewith flew clouds of arrows and showers of bolts. Zhang He, his more than one hundred generals, and his whole pursuing army perished in the Wooden Path.



With myriad shining bolts the air was filled,
The road was littered with brave soldiers killed;
The force to Saber Pass faring perished here;
The tale of valor grows from year to year.



Soon, the second army of Wei under Wei Ping came up, but too late to help. From the signs they knew that their comrades had been victims of a cruel trick, and they turned back.

But as they faced about, a shout was heard, and from the hilltops came, “I, Zhuge Liang, am here!”

Looking up, they saw his figure silhouetted against a fire.

Pointing to the slain, Zhuge Liang cried, “I have gone hunting in this wood. Only, instead of slaying a horse, I have killed a deer. But you may go in peace, and when you see your commander, tell him that he will be my quarry one day!”

The soldiers told this to Sima Yi when they returned.

Sima Yi was deeply mortified, saying, “Letting friend Zhang He die is my fault!”

And when he returned to Luoyang, the Ruler of Wei wept at the death of his brave leader and had his body searched and honorably buried.

Zhuce Liang had no sooner reached Hanzhong than he prepared to go on to Capital Chengdu and see his lord.

But Li Yan, who was in the capital, said to the Latter Ruler, “Why does the Prime Minister return, for I have kept him fully supplied with all things needed for the army?”

Then the Latter Ruler sent Fei Yi into Hanzhong to inquire why the army had retired.

When Fei Yi had arrived and showed the cause of his coming, Zhuge Liang was greatly surprised.

Zhuge Liang showed the letter from Li Yan, saying, “Li Yan wrote to warn that East Wu was about to invade the country.”

Fei Yi said, “Li Yan memorialized to the Throne, saying he had sent you supplies and knew not why Your Excellency returned.”

So Zhuge Liang inquired carefully, and then it came out that Li Yan had failed to find sufficient grain to keep the army supplied, and so had sent the first false letter to the army that it might retire before the shortage showed itself. His memorial to the Throne was designed to cover the former fault.

“The fool has ruined the great design of the state just to save his own skin!” cried Zhuge Liang bitterly.

He summoned the offender and sentenced him to death.

But Fei Yi interceded, saying, “O Prime Minister, the First Ruler had loved and trusted Li Yan with his son. Please forgive him this time.”

And so Li Yan’s life was spared.

However, when Fei Yi made his report in Chengdu, the Latter Ruler was wroth and ordered Li Yan to suffer death.

But this time Jiang Wan intervened, saying, “Your late father named Li Yan as one of the guardians of your youth.”

And the Latter Ruler relented. However, Li Yan was stripped of all ranks and relegated to Zitong.

Zhuge Liang went to Chengdu and appointed Li Teng, Li Yan’s son, as High Counselor.

Preparations then began for another expedition. Plans were discussed, provisions were accumulated, weapons put in order, and officers and soldiers kept fit and trained. By his kindness to the people, Zhuge Liang

waited for three years before beginning marching, and in the two River Lands, people's hearts filled with joy.

And the time passed quickly.

In the second month of the twelfth year (AD 234), Zhuge Liang presented a memorial, saying, "I have been training the army for three years. Supplies are ample, and all is in order for an expedition. We may now attack Wei. If I cannot destroy these rebels, sweep away the evil hordes, and bring about a glorious entry into the capital, then may I never again enter Your Majesty's presence."

The Latter Ruler replied, "The empire has settled on a tripod, and Wu and Wei trouble us not at all. Why not enjoy the present tranquility, O Father Minister?"

"Because of the mission left me by your father. I am ever scheming to destroy Wei, even in my dreams. I must strive my best and do my utmost to regain you the Middle Land and restore the glory of the Hans."

As Zhuge Liang said this, a voice cried, "An army may not go forth, O Prime Minister!"

Qiao Zhou had raised a last protest.

Zhuge Liang's sole thought was service,
Himself he would not spare;
But Qiao Zhou had watched the starry sky,
And read misfortune there.

The next chapter will give the arguments against fighting.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIII

CHAPTER 102

SIMA YI OCCUPIES THE BANKS OF RIVER WEI; ZHUGE LIANG
CONSTRUCTS MECHANICAL BULLOCKS AND HORSES.

Qiao Zhou, who protested against the war, was Grand Historian. He was also an astrologer.

He opposed the war, saying, "My present office involves the direction of the observations on the Astrological Terrace, and I am bound to report whether the aspect forebodes misfortune or promises happiness. Not long since, several flights of thousands of birds came from the south, plunged into River Han, and were drowned. This is an evil augury. Moreover, I have studied the aspect of the sky, and the 'Wolf' constellation is influencing the aspect of the planet Venus. An aura of prosperity pervades the north. To attack Wei will not be to our profit. Again, the people in Chengdu say that the cypress trees moan in the night. With so many evil omens, I wish that the Prime Minister would not go forth to war, but remain at home to guard what we have."

"How can I?" said Zhuge Liang. "His Late Majesty laid upon me a heavy responsibility, and I must exert myself to the utmost in the endeavor to destroy these rebels. The policy of a state cannot be changed because of inauspicious signs."

Zhuce Liang was not to be deterred. He instructed the officials to prepare the Great Bovine Sacrifice in the Dynastic Temple. Then, weeping, he prostrated himself and made this declaration:

“Thy servant Zhuge Liang has made five expeditions to Qishan without gaining any extension of territory. His fault weighs heavily upon him. Now, once again, he is about to march, pledged to use every effort of body and mind to exterminate the rebels against the Han House, and to restore to the dynasty its glory in the Middle Land. To achieve this end, he would use the last remnant of his strength and could die content.”

The sacrifice ended, he took leave of the Latter Ruler and set out for Hanzhong to make the final arrangements for his march. While so engaged, he received the unexpected news of the death of Guan Xing. He was greatly shocked, and fainted. When he had recovered consciousness, his officers did their utmost to console him.

“How pitiful! Why does Heaven deny long life to the loyal and good? I have lost a most able general just as I am setting out and need him most.”



As all are born, so all must die;
People are as gnats against the sky;
But loyalty or piety
May give them immortality.



The armies of Shu numbered three hundred forty thousand strong, and they marched in five divisions, with Jiang Wei and Wei Yan in the van, and when they had reached Qishan, Li Hui, the Commissary General, was instructed to convey stores into the Xie Valley in readiness.

In Wei, they had recently changed the style of the year-period to “Green Dragon” because a green dragon had been seen to emerge from Mopo Well. The year of the fighting was the second year (AD 234).

The courtiers said to the Ruler of Wei, “The commanders of the passes report thirty or so legions advancing in five divisions from Shu upon Qishan.”

The news distressed the Ruler of Wei, who at once called in Sima Yi and told him of the invasion.

Sima Yi replied, “The aspect of the sky is very auspicious for the Middle Land. The Wolf star has encroached upon the planet Venus, which bodes ill for the River Lands. Thus, Zhuge Liang is pitting his powers against Heaven and will meet defeat and suffer death. And I, by virtue of Your Majesty’s good fortune, am to be the instrument of destruction. I request to name four leaders to go with me.”

“Who are they? Name them,” said the Ruler of Wei.

“They are the four sons of Xiahou Yuan: Xiahou Ba, Xiahou Wei, Xiahou Hui, and Xiahou He. Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei are trained archers and cavaliers; Xiahou Hui and Xiahou He are deep strategists. All four desire to avenge the death of their father. Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei should be Leaders of the Van; Xiahou Hui and Xiahou He should be Marching Generals, to discuss and arrange plans for the repulse of our enemy.”

“You remember the evil results of employing the Dynastic Son-in-Law Xiahou Mao: he lost his army and is still too ashamed to return to court. Are you sure these are not of the same kidney?”

“They are not like Xiahou Mao in the least.”

The Ruler of Wei granted the request and named Sima Yi as Commander-in-Chief with the fullest authority. When Sima Yi took leave of the Ruler of Wei, he received a command in Cao Rui's own writing:

“When you, Noble Sir, reach the banks of River Wei and have well fortified that position, you are not to give battle. The army of Shu, disappointed of their desire, will pretend to retire and so entice you on, but you will not pursue. You will wait till their supplies are consumed and they are compelled to retreat, when you may smite them. Then you will obtain the victory without distressing the army unduly. This is the best plan of campaign.”

Sima Yi took it with bowed head. He proceeded forthwith to Changan. When he had mustered the forces assembled from all western counties, they numbered four hundred thousand, and they were all camped on River Wei. In addition, fifty thousand troops were farther up the stream preparing nine floating bridges. The two Leaders of the Van, Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei, were ordered to cross the river and camp, and in rear of the main camp on the east, a solid earth rampart was raised to guard against any surprises from the rear.

While these preparations were in progress, Guo Huai and Sun Li came to the new camp.

Guo Huai said, “With the troops of Shu at Qishan, there is a possibility of their dominating River Wei, going up on the plain, and pushing out a line to the northern hills whereby to cut off all highways in the West Valley Land.”

“You say well,” said Sima Yi. “See to it. Take command of all the West Valley Land forces, occupy Beiyuan, and make a fortified camp there.

But adopt a defensive policy. Wait till the enemy's food supplies get exhausted before you think of attack.”

So Guo Huai and Sun Li left to carry out these orders.

Meanwhile, Zhuge Liang made five main camps at Qishan, and between Xie Valley and Saber Pass, he established a line of fourteen large camps. He distributed the troops among these camps as for a long campaign. He appointed inspecting officers to make daily visits to see that all was in readiness.

When he heard that the army of Wei had camped in Beiyuan, he said to his officers, “They camp there fearing that our holding this area will sever their connection with the West Valley Land. I am pretending to look toward Beiyuan, but really my objective is River Wei. I am going to build a hundred or more large rafts and pile them with straw, and I have five thousands of marines to manage them. In the darkness of the night, I shall attack Beiyuan. Sima Yi will come to the rescue. If he is only a little worsted, I shall cross the river with the rear divisions, then the leading divisions will embark on the rafts, drop down the river, set fire to the floating bridges, and attack the rear of the enemy. I shall lead an army to take the gates of the first camp. If we can get the south bank of the river, the campaign will become simple.”

Then the generals took orders and went to prepare.

The spies carried information of the doings of the troops of Shu to Sima Yi, who said to his generals, “Zhuge Liang has some crafty scheme, but I think I know it. He proposes to make a show of taking Beiyuan, and then, dropping down the river, he will try to burn our bridges, throw our rear into confusion, and then attack our camps.”

So he gave Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei orders: “You are to listen for the sounds of battle about Beiyuan. If you hear the shouting, you are to march down to the river, to the hills on the south, and lay an ambush against the troops of Shu as they arrive.”

Zhang Hu and Yue Chen were to lead two other forces, of two thousand bowmen each, and lie in hiding on the north bank near the bridges to keep off the rafts that might come down on the current and keep them from touching the bridges.

Then he sent for Guo Huai and Sun Li, and said, “Zhuge Liang is coming to Beiyuan to cross the river secretly. Your new force is small, and you can hide halfway along the road. If the enemy cross the river in the afternoon, that will mean an attack on us in the evening. Then you are to simulate defeat and run. They will pursue. You can shoot with all your energy, and our marines and land troops will attack at once. If the attack is in great force, look out for orders.”

All these orders given, Sima Yi sent his two sons Sima Shi and Sima Zhao to reinforce the front camp, while he led his own army to relieve Beiyuan.

Zhuce Liang sent Wei Yan and Ma Dai to cross River Wei and attack Beiyuan, while the attempt to set fire to the bridges was confided to Hu Ban

and Wu Yi. The general attack on the Wei camp by the River Wei was to be made by three divisions: the front division under Wang Ping and Zhang Ni, the middle division under Jiang Wei and Ma Zhong, the rear division under Liao Hua and Zhang Yi. The various divisions started at noon and crossed the river, where they slowly formed up in battle order.

Wei Yan and Ma Dai arrived at Beiyuan about dusk. The scouts having informed the defenders of their approach, Sun Li abandoned his camp and fled. This told Wei Yan that his attack was expected, and he turned to retire. At this moment, a great shouting was heard, and there appeared two bodies of the enemy under Sima Yi and Guo Huai, bearing down upon the attackers from left and right. Wei Yan and Ma Dai fought desperately to extricate themselves, but many of the soldiers of Shu fell into the river and drowned. The others scattered. However, Wu Yi came up and rescued the force from entire destruction, and moved across the river to make camp.

Hu Ban set half his troops to navigate the rafts down the river to the bridges. But Zhang Hu and Yue Chen, stationed near the bridges, shot clouds of arrows at them, and the Shu leader, Hu Ban, was wounded. He fell into the river and was drowned. The crews of the rafts jumped into the water and got away. The rafts fell into the hands of the soldiers of Wei.

At this time, the front division under Wang Ping and Zhang Ni were ignorant of the defeat of their Beiyuan army, and they went straight for the camps of Wei. They arrived during the second watch.

They heard loud shouting, and Wang Ping said to Zhang Ni, "We do not know whether the cavalry sent to Beiyuan has been successful or not. It is strange that we do not see a single soldier of the enemy. Surely, Sima Yi

has found out the plan and prepared to frustrate the attack. Let us wait here till the bridges have been set on fire and we see the flames.”

So they halted. Soon after, a mounted messenger came up with orders: “The Prime Minister bids you retire immediately, as the attack on the bridges has failed.”

Wang Ping and Zhang Ni attempted to withdraw, but a bomb exploded and the troops of Wei, who had taken a byroad to their rear, at once attacked. A great fire started, also. A disorderly battle ensued, from which Wang Ping and Zhang Ni eventually forced their ways out, but only with great loss.

And when Zhuge Liang collected his army at Qishan, once more he found, to his sorrow, that he had lost more than ten thousand troops.

Just at this time, Fei Yi arrived before Chengdu.

Zhuce Liang received him and, after the ceremonies were over, said, “I would trouble you, Sir, to carry a letter for me into Eastern Wu. Will you undertake the mission?”

“Could I possibly decline any task you laid upon me?” said Fei Yi.

So Zhuge Liang wrote a letter and sent it to Sun Quan. Fei Yi took it and hastened to Capital Jianye, where he saw Sun Quan, the Ruler of Wu, and presented this letter:

“The Hans have been unfortunate, and the line of rulers has been broken. The Cao party have usurped the seat of government and still hold the command. My late master, Emperor Bei, confided a great task to me, and I must exhaust every effort to achieve it. Now, my army is

at Qishan, and the rebels are on the verge of destruction on River Wei. I hope Your Majesty, in accordance with your oath of alliance, will send a leader against the north to assist by taking the Middle Land, and the empire can be shared. The full circumstances cannot be told, but I hope you will understand and act.”

Sun Quan was pleased at the news and said to the envoy, “I have long desired to set my arm in motion, but have not been able to arrange with Zhuge Liang. After this letter I will lead an expedition myself, and go to Juchao and capture Xincheng from Wei. Moreover, I will send Lu Xun and Zhuge Jin to camp at Miankou and Jiangxia, and take Xiangyang. I will also send another army under Sun Shao and Zhang Cheng into Guangling to capture Huaiyang. The total number will be three hundred thousand troops, and they shall start at once.”

Fei Yi thanked him and said, “In such a case, the Middle Land will fall forthwith.”

A banquet was prepared. At this, Sun Quan said, “Whom did the Prime Minister send to lead the battle?”

Fei Yi replied, “Wei Yan was the chief leader.”

“A man brave enough, but ambitious. One day he will work a mischief unless Zhuge Liang is present. But surely Zhuge Liang knows.”

“Your Majesty’s words are to the point,” said the envoy. “I will return at once and lay them before Zhuge Liang.”

Fei Yi quickly took leave and hastened to Qishan with his news of the intended expedition of Wu against Wei with three hundred thousand troops in three directions.

“Did the Ruler of Wu say nothing else?” asked Zhuge Liang.

Then Fei Yi told him what had been said about Wei Yan.

“Truly a comprehending ruler,” said Zhuge Liang, appreciatively. “But I could not be ignorant of this. However, I value Wei Yan because he is very bold and devoted.”

“Then, Sir, you ought to decide soon what to do with him.”

“I have a scheme of my own.”

Fei Yi returned to Chengdu, and Zhuge Liang resumed the ordinary camp duties of a leader.

When Zhuge Liang was in a council with his commanders, suddenly a certain Wei leader came and begged to be allowed to surrender. Zhuge Liang had the man brought in and questioned him.

“I am a leader, Zheng Wen by name. General Qin Lang and I are old colleagues. Recently, Sima Yi transferred us and, showing great partiality for my colleague, appointed him Leader of the Van and threw me out like a weed. I was disgusted and left, and I wish to join your ranks if you will accept my service.”

Just at that moment, a soldier came in to say that Qin Lang, with a company, had appeared in front of the tents and was challenging Zheng Wen.

Said Zhuge Liang, “How does this man stand with you in fighting skill?”

“I should just kill him,” said Zheng Wen.

“If you were to slay him, that would remove my doubts.”

Zheng Wen accepted the proposal with alacrity, mounted his horse, and away he went. Zhuge Liang went out to see the fight. There was the

challenger, shaking his spear and reviling his late friend as rebel and brigand and horse-thief.

“Traitor! Give me back my horse you stole!” cried Qin Lang, galloping toward Zheng Wen as soon as he appeared.

Zheng Wen whipped up his horse, waved his sword, and went to meet the attack. In the first bout, he cut down Qin Lang. The Wei soldiers then ran away. The victor hacked off the head of his victim and returned to lay it at Zhuge Liang’s feet.

Seated in his tent, Zhuge Liang summoned Zheng Wen and burst out, “Take him away and behead him!”

“I have done nothing wrong!” cried Zheng Wen.

“As if I do not know Qin Lang! The man you have just killed was not Qin Lang. How dare you try to deceive me?”

Zheng Wen said, “I will own up. But this was his brother Qin Ming.”

Zhuce Liang smiled. “Sima Yi sent you to try this on for some reason of his own, but he could not throw dust in my eyes. If you do not tell the truth, I will put you to death.”

Thus caught, the false deserter confessed and begged his life.

Zhuce Liang said, “You can save your life by writing a letter to Sima Yi telling him to come to raid our camp. I will spare you on this condition. And if I capture Sima Yi, I will give you all the credit and reward you handsomely.”

There was nothing for it but to agree, and the letter was written. Then Zheng Wen was placed in confinement.

But Fan Jian asked, “How did you know this was only a pretended desertion?”

“Sima Yi looks to his people,” replied Zhuge Liang. “If he made Qin Lang a leading general, Qin Lang was certainly a man of great military skill and not the sort of man to be overcome by this fellow Zheng Wen in the first encounter. So Zheng Wen’s opponent certainly was not Qin Lang. That is how I knew.”

They congratulated him on his perspicacity. Then Zhuge Liang selected a certain persuasive speaker from among his officers and whispered certain instructions in his ear. The officer at once left and carried the letter just written to the Wei camp, where he asked to see the Commander-in-Chief. He was admitted, and the letter was read.

“Who are you?” said Sima Yi.

“I am a man from the Middle Land, a poor fellow stranded in Shu. Zheng Wen and I are fellow villagers. Zhuge Liang has given Zheng Wen a Van Leadership as a reward for what he has done, and Zheng Wen got me to bring this letter to you and to say that he will show a light tomorrow evening as a signal, and he hopes you will lead the attack yourself. Zheng Wen will work from the inside in your favor.”

Sima Yi took great pains to test the reliability of these statements, and he examined the letter minutely to see if it bore any signs of fabrication, but he found it was Zheng Wen’s writing.

Presently he ordered in refreshments for the bearer of the letter, and then he said, “We will fix today at the second watch for the raid, and I will lead in person. If it succeeds, I will give you a good appointment as a reward.”

Taking leave, the soldier retraced his steps to his own camp and reported the whole interview to Zhuge Liang.

Zhuge Liang held his sword aloft toward the North Star, took the proper paces for an incantation, and prayed.

This done, he summoned Wang Ping, Zhang Ni, Wei Yan, Ma Dai, Ma Zhong, and Jiang Wei, to whom he gave certain instructions. When they had gone to carry them out, he ascended a hill, taking with him a few score guards only.

Sima Yi had been taken in by Zheng Wen's letter and intended to lead the night raid. But the elder of his sons, Sima Shi, expostulated with his father.

"Father, you are going on a dangerous expedition on the faith of a mere scrap of paper," said his son. "I think it imprudent. What if something goes unexpectedly wrong? Let some general go in your place, and you come up in rear as a reserve."

Sima Yi saw there was reason in this proposal, and he finally decided to send Qin Lang, with ten thousand troops, and Sima Yi himself would command the reserve.

The night was fine, with a bright moon. But about the middle of the second watch, the sky clouded over, and it became very black, so that a man could not see his next neighbor.

"This is providential," chuckled Sima Yi.

The expedition duly started, soldiers with gags, and horses with cords round their muzzles. They moved swiftly and silently, and Qin Lang made straight for the camp of Shu.

But when he reached it and entered, and saw not a soldier, he knew he had been tricked. He yelled to his troops to retire, but lights sprang up all

round, and attacks began from four sides. Fight as he would, Qin Lang could not free himself.

From behind the battle area, Sima Yi saw flames rising from the camp of Shu and heard continuous shouting, but he knew not whether it meant victory for his own army or for his enemy. He pressed forward toward the fire. Suddenly, a shout, a roll of drums, and a blare of trumpets close at hand, a bomb that seemed to rend the earth, and Wei Yan and Jiang Wei bore down upon Sima Yi, one on each flank. This was the final blow to him. Of every ten soldiers of Wei, eight or nine were killed or wounded, and the few others scattered to the four winds.

Meanwhile, Qin Lang's ten thousand troops were falling under arrows that came in locust-flights, and their leader was killed. Sima Yi and the remnant of his army ran away to their own camp.

After the third watch, the sky cleared. Zhuge Liang from the hilltop sounded the gong of retreat. This obscurity in the third watch was due to an incantation called "Concealing Method." The sky became clear, because Zhuge Liang performed another incantation to have the Deities of Six Layers sweep away the few floating clouds that still persisted.

The victory was complete. The first order on Zhuge Liang's return to camp was to put Zheng Wen to death.

Next, he considered new plans for capturing the south bank. Every day, he sent a party to offer a challenge before the camps of the enemy, but no one accepted.

One day, Zhuge Liang rode in his small chariot to the front of the Qishan Mountains, keenly scanned the course of River Wei and carefully surveyed

the lie of the land. Presently, he came to a valley shaped like a bottle-gourd, large enough to form a hiding place for a whole thousand soldiers in the inner recess, while half as many more could hide in the outer. In rear, the mountains were so close that they left passage only for a single horseman. The discovery pleased the general mightily, and he asked the guides what the place was called.

They replied, "It is called Shangfang Valley, and nicknamed 'Gourd Valley.'"

Returning to his camp, he called up two leaders named Du Rui and Hu Zhong and whispered into their ears certain secret orders. Next, he called up a thousand craftspeople and sent them into the Gourd Valley to construct "wooden oxen and running horses" for the use of the troops. Finally, he set Ma Dai with five hundred troops to guard the mouth of the Gourd Valley and prevent all entrance and exit.

Zhuge Liang said, "People from outside cannot enter, from inside cannot exit. I will visit the valley at irregular intervals to inspect the work. A plan for the defeat of Sima Yi is being prepared here and must be kept a profound secret."

Ma Dai left to take up the position. The two generals, Du Rui and Hu Zhong, were superintendents of the work in the Gourd Valley. Zhuge Liang came every day to give instructions.

One day, Yang Yi went to Zhuge Liang and said, "The stores of grain are all at Saber Pass, and the labor of transport is very heavy. What can be done?"

Zhuge Liang replied, smiling, "I have had a scheme ready for a long time. The timber that I collected and bought in the River Lands was for the construction of wooden transport animals to convey grain. It will be very

advantageous, as they will require neither food nor water and they can keep on the move day and night without resting.”

All those within hearing said, “From old days till now no one has ever heard of such a device. What excellent plan have you, O Prime Minister, to make such marvelous creatures?”

“They are being made now after my plans, but they are not yet ready. Here I have the sketches for these mechanical oxen and horses, with all their dimensions written out in full. You may see the details.”

Zhuge Liang then produced a paper, and all the generals crowded round to look at it. They were all greatly astonished and lauded, “The Prime Minister is superhuman!”

A few days later, the new mechanical animals were complete and began work. They were quite lifelike and went over the hills in any desired direction. The whole army saw them with delight. They were put under charge of Right General Gao Xiang and a thousand soldiers to guide them. They kept going constantly between Saber Pass and the front, carrying grain for the use of the soldiers.



Along the Saber Pass mountain roads
The running horses bore their loads,
And through Xie Valley's narrow way
The wooden oxen paced each day.
O generals, use these means today,
And transport troubles take away.

Sima Yi was already sad enough at his defeat, when the spies told him of these wooden bullocks and horses of new design which the soldiers of Shu were using to convey their grain.

This troubled him still more, and he said to his generals, "I knew the transportation from the River Lands was difficult; therefore, I shut the gates and remained on the defensive, waiting for the enemy to be starved. With this device, they may never be compelled to retreat for want of food."

Then he called up Zhang Hu and Yue Chen and gave orders: "Each of you, with five hundred troops, will go to the Xie Valley by byroads. When you see the Shu soldiers transport their grain by, you are to let them through, but only to attack at the end and capture four or five of the wooden horses and bullocks."

So a thousand soldiers went on this service disguised as soldiers of Shu. They made their way along the byways by night and hid. Presently, the wooden convoy came along under the escort of Gao Xiang. Just as the end of it was passing, they made a sudden rush, and captured a few of the "animals" which the soldiers of Shu abandoned. In high glee, they took them to their own camp.

When Sima Yi saw them, he had to confess they were very lifelike. But what pleased him most was that he could imitate them now that he had models.

"If Zhuge Liang can use this sort of thing, it would be strange if I could not," said he.

He called to him many clever craftspeople and made them then and there take the machines to pieces and make some exactly like them. In less than half a month, they had completed a couple thousand after Zhuge Liang's models, and the new mechanical animals could move. Then Sima Yi placed Cen Wei, General Who Guards the Frontiers, in charge of this

new means of transport, and the “animals” began to ply between the camp and the West Valley Land. The Wei soldiers were filled with joy.

Gao Xiang returned to camp and reported the loss of a few of his wooden oxen and horses.

“I wished him to capture some of them,” said Zhuge Liang, much pleased. “I am just laying out these few, and before long I shall get some very solid help in exchange.”

“How do you know, O Prime Minister?” said his officers.

“Because Sima Yi will certainly copy them, and when he has done that, I have another plan ready to play on him.”

Some days later, Zhuge Liang received a report that the enemy were using the same sort of wooden bullocks and horses to bring up supplies from Xizhou.

“Exactly as I thought,” said he.

Calling Wang Ping, he said, “Dress up a thousand soldiers as those of Wei, and find your way quickly and secretly to Beiyuan. Tell them that you are escort for the convoy, and mingle with the real escort. Then, suddenly turn on them so that they scatter. Next, you will turn the herd this way. By and by, you will be pursued. When that occurs, you will give a turn to the tongues of the wooden animals, and they will be locked from movement. Leave them where they are and run away. When the soldiers of Wei come up, they will be unable to drag the creatures and equally unable to carry them. I shall have soldiers ready, and you will go back with them, give the tongues a backward turn, and bring the convoy here. The enemy will be greatly astonished.”

Next he called Zhang Ni and said, “Dress up five hundred soldiers in the costume of the Deities of the Six Layers so that they appear supernatural. Fit them with demon heads and wild beast shapes, and let them stain their faces various colors so as to look as strange as possible. Give them flags and swords and bottle-gourds with smoke issuing from combustibles inside. Let these soldiers hide among the hills till the convoy approaches, when they will start the smoke, rush out suddenly, and drive off the wooden animals. No one will dare pursue such uncanny company.”

When Zhang Ni had left, Wei Yan and Jiang Wei were called.

“You will take ten thousand troops, go to the border of Beiyuan to receive the wooden transport creatures, and defend them against attack.”

Then, another five thousand under Zhang Yi and Liao Hua was sent to check Sima Yi if he should come, while a small force under Ma Dai and Ma Zhong was sent to bid defiance to the enemy near their camp on the south bank.

So one day, when a convoy was on its way from the West Valley Land, the scouts in front suddenly reported some soldiers ahead who said they were escort for the grain. Commander Cen Wei halted and sent to inquire. It appeared the newcomers were really the soldiers of Wei, however, and so he started once more.

The newcomers joined up with his own troops. But before they had gone much farther, there was a yell, and the men of Shu began to kill, while a voice shouted, “Wang Ping is here!”

The convoy guards were taken aback. Many were killed, but the others rallied round Cen Wei and made some defense. However, Wang Ping slew Cen Wei, and the others ran this way and that, while the convoy was turned toward the Shu camp.

The fugitives ran off to Beiyuan and reported the mishap to Guo Huai, who set out hotfoot to rescue the convoy. When he appeared, Wang Ping gave the order to turn tongues, left the wooden animals in the road, and ran away. Guo Huai made no attempt to pursue, but tried to put the wooden animals in motion toward their proper destination. But he could not move them.

He was greatly perplexed. Then suddenly, there arose the roll of drums all round, and out burst two parties of soldiers. These were Wei Yan and Jiang Wei's troops, and when they appeared, Wang Ping's soldiers faced about and came to the attack, as well. These three being too much for Guo Huai, he retreated before them. Thereupon, the tongues were turned back again and the wooden herd set in motion.

Seeing this, Guo Huai came on again. But just then, he saw smoke curling up among the hills and a lot of extraordinary creatures burst out upon him. Some held swords and some flags, and all were terrible to look at. They rushed at the wooden animals and urged them away.

"Truly these are supernatural helpers," cried Guo Huai, quite frightened.

The soldiers, also, were terror-stricken and stood still.

Hearing that his Beiyuan troops had been driven off, Sima Yi came out to the rescue. Midway along the road, just where it was most precipitous, a cohort burst out upon him with fierce yells and bursting bombs. Upon the leading banners, he read, "Han General Zhang Yi" and "Han General Liao Hua."

Panic seized upon his army, and they ran like winds.

In the field the craftier leader on the convoy makes a
raid,
And his rival's life endangers by an ambush subtly
laid.

If you would know the upshot, read the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIII

CHAPTER 103

IN GOURD VALLEY, SIMA YI IS TRAPPED; IN WUZHANG PLAINS, ZHUGE
LIANG INVOKES THE STARS.

Heavily smitten in the battle, Sima Yi fled from the field a lonely horseman. Seeing a thick wood in the distance, he made for its shelter.

Zhang Yi halted the rear division while Liao Hua pressed forward after the fugitive, whom he could see threading his way among the trees. And Sima Yi indeed was soon in fear of his life, dodging from tree to tree as his pursuer neared. Once, Liao Hua was actually close enough to slash at his enemy, but Liao Hua missed the blow and his sword struck a tree; before he could pull his sword out of the wood, Sima Yi had got clear away.

When Liao Hua got through into the open country, he did not know which way to go. Presently, he noticed a golden helmet lying on the ground to the east, just lately thrown aside. He picked it up, hung it on his saddle, and went away eastward.

But the crafty fugitive, having flung away his helmet thus on the east side of the wood, had gone away west, so that Liao Hua was going away from his quarry. After some time, Liao Hua fell in with Jiang Wei, when he abandoned the pursuit and rode with Jiang Wei back to camp.

The wooden oxen and running horses having been driven into camp, their loads were put into the storehouse. The grain that fell to the victors amounted to ten thousand carts or more.

Liao Hua presented the enemy's helmet as proof of his prowess in the field and received a reward of the first grade of merit. Wei Yan went away

angry and discontented; Zhuge Liang noticed this, but he said nothing.

Very sadly, Sima Yi returned to his own camp. Bad news followed, for a messenger brought letters telling of an invasion by three armies of Wu. The letters said that forces had been sent against them, and the Ruler of Wei again enjoined upon his Commander-in-Chief a waiting and defensive policy. So Sima Yi deepened his moats and raised his ramparts.

Meanwhile, when the South Land marched against the Middle Land, Cao Rui sent three armies against the invaders: Liu Shao led that to save Jiangxia; Tian Yu led the Xiangyang force; Cao Rui himself, with Man Chong, went into Hefei. This last was the main army.

Man Chong led the leading division toward Lake Chaohu. Thence, looking across to the eastern shore, he saw a forest of battleships, and flags and banners crowded the sky. So he returned to the main army and proposed an attack without loss of time.

“The enemy think we shall be fatigued after a long march, and so they have not troubled to prepare any defense. We should attack this night, and we shall overcome them.”

“What you say accords with my own ideas,” said the Ruler of Wei.

Then the Ruler of Wei told off the cavalry leader, Zhang Qiu, to take five thousand troops and try to burn out the enemy with combustibles. Man Chong was also to attack from the eastern bank.

In the second watch of that night, the two forces set out and gradually approached the entrance to the lake. They reached the marine camp unobserved, burst upon it with a yell, and the soldiers of Wu fled without

striking a blow. The troops of Wei set fires going in every direction and thus destroyed all the ships, together with much grain and many weapons.

Zhuge Jin, who was in command, led his beaten troops to Miankou, and the attackers returned to their camp much elated.

When the report came to Lu Xun, he called together his officers and said, "I must write to the Emperor to abandon the siege of Xincheng, that the army may be employed to cut off the retreat of the Wei army while I will attack them in front. They will be harassed by the double danger, and we shall break them."

All agreed that this was a good plan, and the memorial was drafted. It was sent by the hand of a junior officer, who was told to convey it secretly. But this messenger was captured at the ferry and taken before the Ruler of Wei.

Cao Rui read the dispatch, then said with a sigh, "This Lu Xun of Wu is really very resourceful."

The captive was put into prison, and Liu Shao was told off to defend the rear and keep off Sun Quan's army.

Now Zhuge Jin's defeated soldiers were suffering from hot weather illnesses, and at length he was compelled to write and tell Lu Xun, and ask that his army be relieved and sent home.

Having read this dispatch, Lu Xun said to the messenger, "Make my obeisance to the General, and say that I will decide."

When the messenger returned with this reply, Zhuge Jin asked what was going on in the Commander-in-Chief's camp.

The messenger replied, "The soldiers were all outside planting beans, and the officers were amusing themselves at the gates. They were playing a game of skill, throwing arrows into narrow-necked vases."

Alarmed, Zhuge Jin himself went to his chief's camp.

Said he, "Cao Rui himself leads the expedition, and the enemy is very strong. How do you, O Commander, meet this pressing danger?"

Lu Xun replied, "My messenger to the Emperor was captured, and thus my plans were discovered. Now it is useless to prepare to fight, and so we had better retreat. I have sent in a memorial to engage the Emperor to retire gradually."

Zhuge Jin replied, "Why delay? If you think it best to retire, it had better be done quickly."

"My army must retreat slowly, or the enemy will come in pursuit, which will mean defeat and loss. Now, you must first prepare your ships as if you meant to resist, while I make a semblance of an attack toward Xiangyang. Under cover of these operations we shall withdraw into the South Land, and the enemy will not dare to follow."

So Zhuge Jin returned to his own camp and began to fit out his ships as if for an immediate expedition, while Lu Xun made all preparations to march, giving out that he intended to advance upon Xiangyang.

The news of these movements were duly reported in the Wei camps. When the leaders heard it, they wished to go out and fight. But the Ruler of Wei knew his opponent better than they and would not bring about a battle.

So he called his officers together and said to them, "This Lu Xun is very crafty. Keep careful guard, but do not risk a battle."

The officers obeyed.

A few days later, the scouts brought in news: “The three armies of Wu have retired!”

The Ruler of Wei doubted and sent out some of his own spies, who confirmed the report.

When he thus knew it was true, he consoled himself with the words, “Lu Xun knows the art of war even as did Sun Zi and Wu Qi. The subjugation of the southeast is not for me this time.”

Thereupon, Cao Rui distributed his generals among the various vantage points and led the main army back into Hefei, where he camped, ready to take advantage of any change of conditions that might promise success.

Meanwhile, Zhuge Liang was at Qishan, where he intended to make a long sojourn. He made his soldiers mix with the people in Wei and share in the labor of the fields and the crops—the soldiers one-third, the people two-third. He gave strict orders against any encroachment on the property of the farmers, and so they and the soldiers lived together very amicably.

Then Sima Yi’s son, Sima Shi, went to his father and said, “These soldiers of Shu have despoiled us of much grain, and now they are mingling with the people of Qishan and tilling the fields along the banks of River Wei as if they intended to remain there. This would be a calamity for us. Why do you not appoint a time to fight a decisive battle with Zhuge Liang?”

His father replied, “I have the Emperor’s orders to act on the defensive and may not do as you suggest.”

While they were thus talking, one reported that Wei Yan had come near and was insulting the army and reminding them that he had the helmet

of their leader. And he was challenging them. The generals were greatly incensed and desired to accept the challenge, but the Commander-in-Chief was immovable in his decision to obey his orders.

“The sage says: ‘If one cannot suffer small things, great matters are imperiled.’ Our plan is to defend.”

So the challenge was not accepted, and there was no battle. After reviling them for some time, Wei Yan went away.

Seeing that his enemy was not to be provoked into fighting, Zhuge Liang gave orders to Ma Dai to build a strong stockade in the Gourd Valley and therein to excavate pits and to collect large quantities of inflammables. So on the hill they piled wood and straw in the shape of sheds, and all about they dug pits and buried mines. When these preparations were complete, Ma Dai received instructions to block the road in rear of Gourd Valley and to lay an ambush at the entrance.

“If Sima Yi comes, let him enter the valley, and then explode the mines and set fire to the straw and the wood,” said Zhuge Liang. “Also, set up seven star flags at the mouth of the valley and arrange a night signal of seven lamps on the hill.”

After Ma Dai had gone, Wei Yan was called in, and Zhuge Liang said to him, “Go to the camp of Wei with five hundred troops and provoke them to battle. The important matter is to entice Sima Yi out of his stronghold. You will be unable to obtain a victory, so retreat that he may pursue. You are to make for the signal, the seven star flags by day or the seven lamps at night. Thus you will lead him into the Gourd Valley, where I have a plan prepared for him.”

When Wei Yan had gone, Gao Xiang was summoned.

“Take small herds, forty or fifty at a time, of the wooden oxen and running horses, load them up with grain, and lead them to and fro on the mountains. If you can succeed in getting the enemy to capture them, you will render a service.”

So the transport wooden cattle were sent forth to play their part in the scheme, and the remainder of the Qishan soldiers were sent to work in the fields.

He gave orders to his generals, saying, “If the enemy under other leaders come to attack, you are to flee the field. Only in the case Sima Yi comes in person, you are to attack most vigorously the south bank of the river and cut off the retreat.”

Then Zhuge Liang led his army away to camp next to the Gourd Valley.

Xiahou Hui and Xiahou He went to their chief, Sima Yi, and said, “The enemy have set out camps and are engaged in field work as though they intended to remain. If they are not destroyed now, but are allowed to consolidate their position, they will be hard to dislodge.”

“This certainly is one of Zhuge Liang’s ruses,” said the chief.

“You seem very afraid of him, Commander,” retorted they. “When do you think you can destroy him? At least let us two brothers fight one battle, that we may prove our gratitude for the Emperor’s kindness.”

“If it must be so, then you may go in two divisions,” said Sima Yi.

As the two divisions, five thousand troops each, were marching along, they saw coming toward them a number of the transport wooden animals of the enemy. They attacked at once, drove off the escort, captured them, and sent them back to camp. Next day, they captured more, with soldiers and horses as well, and sent them also to camp.

Sima Yi called up the prisoners and questioned them.

They told him, saying, "The Prime Minister understood that you would not fight, and so had told off the soldiers to various places to work in the fields, and therefore provide for future needs. We had been unwittingly captured."

Sima Yi set them free and bade them begone.

"Why spare them?" asked Xiahou He.

"There is nothing to be gained by the slaughter of a few common soldiers. Let them go back to their own and praise the kindness of the Wei leaders. That will slacken the desire of their comrades to fight against us. That was the plan by which Lu Meng captured Jingzhou."

Then he issued general orders that all Shu prisoners should be well-treated and sent away free. However, he kept rewarding those of his army who had done well.

As has been said, Gao Xiang was ordered to keep pretended convoys on the move, and the soldiers of Wei attacked and captured them whenever they saw them. In half a month they had scored many successes of this sort, and Sima Yi's heart was cheered. One day, when he had made new captures of soldiers, he sent for them and questioned them again.

"Where is Zhuge Liang now?"

“He is no longer at Qishan, but in camp about three miles from the Gourd Valley. He is gathering a great store of grain there.”

After he had questioned them fully, he set the prisoners free.

Calling together his officers, he said, “Zhuge Liang is not camped on Qishan, but near the Gourd Valley. Tomorrow, you shall attack the Qishan camp, and I will command the reserve.”

The promise cheered them, and they went away to prepare.

“Father, why do you intend to attack the enemy’s rear?” asked Sima Shi.

“Qishan is their main position, and they will certainly hasten to its rescue. Then I shall make for the valley and burn the stores. That will render them helpless and will be a victory.”

The son exclaimed his admiration for the plan.

Sima Yi began to march out, with Zhang Hu and Yue Chen following as the reserves.

From the top of a hill, Zhuge Liang watched the Wei soldiers march and noticed that they moved in companies from three to five thousand, observing the front and the rear carefully as they marched. He guessed that their object was the Qishan camp.

So he sent strict orders to his generals: “If Sima Yi leads in person, you are to go off and capture the Wei camp and the south bank of River Wei.”

They received and obeyed his orders.

When the troops of Wei had gotten near and made their rush toward the camp of Shu in Qishan, the troops of Shu ran up, also, yelling and

pretending to reinforce the defenders. Sima Yi, seeing the Shu troops rushing to rescue Qishan, suddenly marched his center army's guards with his two sons, changed his direction, and turned off for the Gourd Valley. Here, Wei Yan was expecting him; as soon as he appeared, Wei Yan galloped up and soon recognized Sima Yi as the leader.

“Sima Yi, stay!” shouted Wei Yan as he came near.

He flourished his sword, and Sima Yi set his spear. The two warriors exchanged a few passes, and then Wei Yan suddenly turned his steed and bolted. As he had been ordered, he made direct for the seven star flags, and Sima Yi followed, the more readily as he saw the fugitive had but a small force. The two sons of Sima Yi rode with him, Sima Shi on the left, Sima Zhao on the right.

Presently, Wei Yan and his troops entered the mouth of the valley. Sima Yi halted a time while he sent forward a few scouts.

They returned and reported, “Not a single Shu soldier is seen, but a many straw houses are on the hills.”

Sima Yi said, “This must be the store valley!”

He led his army in eagerly. But when he had got well within, Sima Yi noticed that kindling wood was piled over the straw huts, and as he saw no sign of Wei Yan, he began to feel uneasy.

“Supposing soldiers seize the entrance. What then?” said he to his sons.

As he spoke there arose a great shout, and from the hillside came many torches, which fell all around them and set fire to the straw, so that soon the entrance to the valley was lost in smoke and flame. They tried to get away from the fire, but no road led up the hillside. Then fire arrows came shooting down, and the earth mines exploded, and the straw and firewood

blazed high as the heavens. The fire caused strong winds, and the winds aided the fire; the valley became a fiery stove.

Sima Yi, scared and helpless, dismounted, clasped his arms about his two sons, and wept, saying, "My sons, we three are doomed!"

As they stood weeping, a fierce gale suddenly sprang up, black clouds gathered, a peal of thunder followed, and rain poured down in torrents, speedily extinguishing the fire all through the valley. The mines no longer exploded, and all the fiery contrivances ceased to work mischief.

"If we do not break out now, what better chance shall we have?" cried Sima Yi, and he led the soldiers to make a dash for the outlet.

As they broke out of the valley, they came upon reinforcements under Zhang Hu and Yue Chen, and so were once more safe. Ma Dai was not strong enough to pursue, and the soldiers of Wei got safely to the river.

But there they found their camp in the possession of the enemy, while Guo Huai and Sun Li were on the floating bridge, struggling with the troops of Shu. Sima Yi charged up hastily, and the troops of Shu retreated, whereupon Sima Yi crossed the river and ordered the bridges burned. He then occupied the north bank.

The Wei army attacking the Qishan camp were greatly disturbed when they heard of the defeat of their Commander-in-Chief and the loss of the camp on River Wei. The troops of Shu took the occasion to strike with greater vigor, and so gained a great victory. The beaten army suffered heavy loss. Those who escaped fled across the river.

When Zhuge Liang, from the hilltop, saw that Sima Yi had been inveigled into the trap by Wei Yan, he rejoiced exceedingly, and when he saw the flames burst forth, he thought surely his rival was done for. Then,

unhappily for him, Heaven thought it well to send down torrents of rain, which quenched the fire and upset all his calculations.

Soon after, the scouts reported the escape of his victims.

Zhuge Liang sighed, saying, "Humanity proposes; God disposes. We cannot wrest events to our will."



Fierce fires roared in the valley,
But the rain quenched them.
Had Zhuge Liang's plan but succeeded,
Would have been the Jins?

From the new camp on the north bank of the river, Sima Yi issued an order: "The south shore has been lost. If any of you proposes going out to battle again, he shall be put to death!"

Accordingly, no one spoke of attacking, but all turned their energies toward defense.

Guo Huai went to the general to talk over plans. He said, "The enemy have been carefully spying out the country. They are certainly selecting a new position for a camp."

Sima Yi said, "If Zhuge Liang goes out to Wugong Plains, and thence eastward along the hills, we shall be in grave danger. If he goes westward along River Wei, and halts on the Wuzhang Plains, we need feel no anxiety."

They decided to send scouts to find out the movements of their enemy. Presently, the scouts returned to say that Zhuge Liang had chosen the Wuzhang Plains.

“Our great Emperor of Wei has remarkable fortune,” said Sima Yi, clapping his hand to his forehead.

Then he confirmed the order to remain strictly on the defensive till some change of circumstances on the part of the enemy should promise advantage.

After his army had settled into camp on the Wuzhang Plains, Zhuge Liang continued his attempts to provoke a battle. Day after day, parties went to challenge the army of Wei, but they resisted all provocation.

One day, Zhuge Liang wrote a letter, which he sent to his rival. The generals led the bearer of the letter to their chief. Sima Yi opened the letter, which read something like this:

“Friend Sima Yi, although you are the Commander-in-Chief and lead the armies of the Middle Land, you seem but little disposed to display the firmness and valor that would render a contest decisive. Instead, you have prepared a comfortable lair where you are safe from the keen edge of the sword. Are you not very like a coward? Wherefore I send this letter, and you will humbly accept it and the humiliation, unless, indeed, you finally decide to come out and fight like a warrior. If you are not entirely indifferent to shame, if you retain any of the feelings of a leader, you will answer by giving battle.”

Sima Yi, although inwardly raging, pretended to take it all as a joke and smiled.

“So he regards me as a coward,” said he.

He accepted the letter and treated the messenger well. Before the messenger left, Sima Yi asked him a few questions about his master’s eating and sleeping and hours of labor.

“The Prime Minister works very hard,” said the messenger. “He rises early and retires to bed late. He attends personally to all cases requiring punishment of over twenty of strokes. As for food, he does not eat more than a few pints of grain daily.”

“Indeed, Zhuge Liang eats little and works much,” remarked Sima Yi to his generals. “Can he last long?”

The messenger returned to his own side and reported to Zhuge Liang, saying, “Sima Yi took the whole episode in good part and shown no sign of anger. He only asked about the Prime Minister’s hours of rest, and food, and such things. He said no word about military matters. I told him that you ate little and worked long hours, and then he said, ‘Can he last long?’ That was all.”

“He knows me,” said Zhuge Liang, pensively.

First Secretary Yang Yong presently ventured to remonstrate with his chief.

“I notice,” said Yang Yong, “that you check the books personally. I think that is needless labor for a Prime Minister to undertake. In every administration, the higher and subordinate ranks have their especial fields of activity, and each should confine his labors to his own field. In a household, for example, the male plows and the female cooks, and thus operations are carried on without waste of energy, and all needs are

supplied. If one individual strives to attend personally to every matter, he only wearies himself and fails to accomplish his end. How can he possibly hope to perform all the various tasks well?

“And, indeed, the ancients held this same opinion, for they said that the high officers should attend to the discussion of ways and means, and the lower should carry out details. Of old, Bing Ji was moved to deep thought by the panting of an ox, but inquired not about the corpses of certain brawlers which lay about the road, for this matter concerned the magistrate. Chen Ping was ignorant of the figures relating to taxes, for he said these were the concern of the tax controllers.

“O Prime Minister, you weary yourself with minor details and sweat yourself everyday. You are wearing yourself out, and Sima Yi has good reason for what he said.”

“I know—I cannot but know,” replied Zhuge Liang with tears in his eyes. “But this heavy responsibility was laid upon me, and I fear no other will be so devoted as I am.”

Those who heard him wept. Thereafter, Zhuge Liang appeared more and more harassed, and military operations did not speed.

On the other side, the officers of Wei resented bitterly the insult that had been put upon them when their leader had been presented with the provocative letter.

They wished to avenge the taunt, and went to their general, saying, “We are reputable generals of the army of a great state. How can we put up with such insults from these soldiers of Shu? We pray you let us fight them.”

“It is not that I fear to go out,” said Sima Yi, “nor that I relish the insults, but I have the Emperor’s command to hold on and may not disobey.”

The officers were not in the least appeased.

Wherefore, Sima Yi said, “I will send your request to the Throne in a memorial. What think you of that?”

They consented to await the Emperor’s reply, and a messenger bore to the Ruler of Wei, in Hefei, this memorial:

“I have small ability and high office. Your Majesty laid on me the command to defend and not fight till the army of Shu had suffered by the flux of time. But Zhuge Liang has now sent me a letter openly calling me a coward, and my shame is very deep. Wherefore I advise Your Majesty that one day I shall have to fight in order to justify your kindness to me and to remove the shameful stigma that now rests upon my army. I cannot express the degree to which I am urged to this course.”

Cao Rui read it and turned questioningly to his courtiers, seeking an explanation. Said he, “Sima Yi has been in obstinate defense; why does he want to attack now?”

Commander Xin Pi replied, “Sima Yi has no desire to give battle. This memorial is because of the shame put upon the officers by Zhuge Liang’s letter. They are all in a rage. He wishes for an edict to pacify them.”

Cao Rui understood and gave to Xin Pi an authority ensign and sent him to the River Wei camp to make known that it was the Emperor’s command not to fight.

Sima Yi received the messenger with all respect, and it was given out that any future reference to offering battle would be taken as disobedience to the Emperor's especial command in the edict.

The officers could but obey.

Sima Yi said to Xin Pi, "Noble Sir, you interpreted my own desire correctly!"

It was thenceforward understood that Sima Yi was forbidden to give battle.

When this was told to Zhuge Liang, he said, "This is only Sima Yi's method of pacifying his army."

Jiang Wei asked, "How do you know, O Prime Minister?"

"Sima Yi has never had any intention of fighting. So he requested the edict to justify his strategy. It is well known that a general in the field takes no command from any person, not even his own prince. Is it likely that he would send a thousand miles to ask permission to fight if that was all he needed? The officers were bitter, and so Sima Yi got the Emperor to assist him in maintaining discipline. All this is meant to slacken our soldiers."

Just at this time, Fei Yi came from Capital Chengdu. He was called in to see the Prime Minister, and Zhuge Liang asked the reason for his coming.

He replied, "The Ruler of Wei, Cao Rui, hearing that Wu has invaded his country at three points, has led a great army to Hefei and sent three armies under Man Chong, Tian Yu, and Liu Shao, to oppose the invaders. The stores and arms of Wu have been burned, and the army of Wu have fallen victims to sickness. A letter from Lu Xun containing a scheme of attack fell into the hands of the enemy, and the Ruler of Wu has marched back into his own country."

Zhuge Liang listened to the end; then, without a word, he fell in a swoon. He recovered after a time, but he was broken.

He said, "My mind is all in confusion. This is a return of my old illness, and I am doomed."

Ill as he was, Zhuge Liang that night went forth from his tent to scan the heavens and study the stars. They filled him with fear.

He returned and said to Jiang Wei, "My life may end at any moment."

"Why do you say such a thing?"

"Just now, in the Three Stars constellation, the Guest Star was twice as bright as usual, while the Host Star was darkened; the supporting stars were also obscure. With such an aspect, I know my fate."

"If the aspect be as malignant as you say, why not pray in order to avert it?" replied Jiang Wei.

"I am in the habit of praying," replied Zhuge Liang, "but I know not the will of God. However, prepare me forty-nine guards and let each have a black flag. Dress them in black and place them outside my tent. Then will I, from within my tent, invoke the Seven Stars of the North. If my master-lamp remain alight for seven days, then is my life to be prolonged for twelve years. If the lamp goes out, then I am to die. Keep all idlers away from the tent, and let a couple of guards bring me what is necessary."

Jiang Wei prepared as directed.

It was then the eighth month, mid-autumn, and the Milky Way was brilliant with scattered jade. The air was perfectly calm, and no sound was heard. The forty-nine men were brought up and spaced out to guard the tent, while within, Zhuge Liang prepared incense and offerings. On the floor of the tent, he arranged seven lamps, and, outside these, forty-nine smaller lamps. In the middle, he placed the lamp of his own fate.

This done, he prayed:

“Zhuge Liang, born into an age of trouble, would willingly have grown old in retirement. But His Majesty, Liu Bei the Glorious Emperor, sought him thrice and confided to him the heavy responsibility of guarding his son. He dared not do less than spend himself to the utmost in such a task, and he pledged himself to destroy the rebels. Suddenly, the star of his leadership has declined, and his life now nears its close. He has humbly indited a declaration on this silk piece to the Great Unknowable and now hopes that He will graciously listen and extend the number of his days that he may prove his gratitude to his prince and be the savior of the people, restore the old state of the empire, and establish eternally the Han sacrifices. He dares not make a vain prayer: this is from his heart.”

This prayer ended, in the solitude of his tent Zhuge Liang awaited the dawn.

Next day, ill as he was, he did not neglect his duties, although he spat blood continually. All day he labored at his plans, and at night he paced the magic steps, the steps of seven stars of Ursa Major and Ursa Minor.

Sima Yi remained still on the defensive.

One night, as he sat gazing up at the sky and studying its aspect, he suddenly turned to Xiahou Ba, saying, “A leadership star has just lost position; surely Zhuge Liang is ill and will soon die. Take a reconnoitering party of one thousand to the Wuzhang Plains and find out. If you see signs of confusion, it means that Zhuge Liang is ill. I shall take the occasion to smite hard.”

Xiahou Ba left with an army.

It was the sixth night of Zhuge Liang's prayers, and the lamp of his fate still burned brightly. He began to feel a secret joy. Presently, Jiang Wei entered and watched the ceremonies. He saw Zhuge Liang was loosening his hair, his hand holding a sword, his heels stepping on Ursa Major and Ursa Minor to hold the leadership star.

Suddenly, a great shouting was heard outside, and Jiang Wei was about to send someone to inquire when Wei Yan dashed in, crying, "The Wei soldiers are upon us!"

In his haste, Wei Yan had knocked over and extinguished the Lamp of Fate.

Zhuge Liang threw down the sword and sighed, saying, "Life and death are foreordained. No prayers can alter them."

Stunned, Wei Yan fell to the earth and craved forgiveness. Jiang Wei got angry and drew his sword to slay the unhappy general.

Nought is under man's control,
Nor can he with fate contend.

The next chapter will unfold what happened.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIII

CHAPTER 104

A FALLING STAR: THE PRIME MINISTER ASCENDS TO HEAVEN; A
WOODEN STATUE: THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF IS TERRIFIED.

The unhappy Wei Yan did not suffer the edge of the sword, for Zhuge Liang stayed the stroke, saying, "It is my fate—not his fault."

So Jiang Wei put up his sword.

Zhuce Liang spat a few mouthfuls of blood, then sank wearily upon his couch.

Said he, "Sima Yi thinks I am dead, and he sent these few troops to make sure. Go and drive them off."

Wei Yan left the tent and led out a small party to drive away the troops of Wei, who fled as they appeared. He chased them more than seven miles and returned. Then Zhuge Liang sent Wei Yan to his own camp and bade him keep a vigilant lookout.

Presently, Jiang Wei came in, went up to the sick man's couch, and asked how he felt.

Zhuge Liang replied, "My death is very near. My chief desire has been to spend myself to the utmost to restore Han to its glory and to regain the Middle Land. But Heaven decrees it otherwise. My end is not far away. I have written a book in twenty-four chapters, 104,112 words, treating the Eight Needfuls, the Seven Cautions, the Six Fears, and the Five Dreads of war. But among all those about me, there is no one fit to receive it and carry on my work, save you. I pray you not to despise it."

He gave the treatise to Jiang Wei, who received it, sobbing.

“I have also a plan for a repeating crossbow, which I have been unable to execute. The weapon shoots ten bolts of eight inches length at every discharge. The sketches are quite ready, and the weapons can be made according to them.”

Jiang Wei took the papers with a deep bow.

The dying man continued, “There is no part of Shu that causes anxiety, save the Yinping Mountains. That must be carefully guarded. It is protected naturally by its lofty precipices, but it will surely be the cause of great losses.”

Next, Zhuge Liang sent for Ma Dai, to whom he gave certain whispered instructions, and then said, “You are to follow out my instructions after my death.”

Soon after, Yang Yi entered the tent and went to the couch. He received a silken bag containing certain secret orders.

As Zhuge Liang gave it to him, he said, “After my death, Wei Yan will turn traitor. When that happens and the army is in danger, you will find herein what to do.”

Just as these arrangements were finished, Zhuge Liang fell into a swoon, from which he did not revive till late in the evening. Then he set himself to composing a memorial to the Latter Ruler.

When this reached the Latter Ruler, he was greatly alarmed and at once sent Chief Secretary Li Fu to visit and confer with the dying minister.

Li Fu traveled quickly to the Wuzhang Plains and was led to the tent of the Commander-in-Chief. He delivered the Latter Ruler’s command and inquired after the sick man’s welfare.

Zhuge Liang wept, and he replied, “Unhappily, I am dying and leaving my task incomplete. I am injuring my country’s policy and am in fault to the world. After my death, you must aid the Emperor in perfect loyalty, and see that the old policy is continued and the rules of government maintained. Do not lightly cast out the people I have employed. My plans of campaign have been confided to Jiang Wei, who can continue my policy for the service of the state. But my hour draws near, and I must write my testament.”

Li Fu listened, and then took his leave.

Zhuge Liang made one final effort to carry out his duties. He rose from his couch, was helped into a small carriage, and thus made a round of inspection of all the camps and posts. But the cold autumn wind chilled him to the bone.

“I shall never again lead the army against the rebels,” said he. “O Azure Heaven, when will this regret end?”

Zhuge Liang returned to his tent. He became rapidly weaker and called Yang Yi to his bedside.

Said he, “Ma Dai, Wang Ping, Liao Hua, Zhang Yi, and Zhang Ni may be depended on to the death. They have fought many campaigns and borne many hardships; they should be retained in the public service. After my death, let everything go on as before, but the army is to be gradually withdrawn. You know the tactics to be followed, and I need say little. My friend Jiang Wei is wise and brave; set him to guard the retreat.”

Yang Yi received these orders, weeping.

Next, writing materials were brought in, and the dying minister set himself to write his testament. It is here given in substance:

“Life and death are the common lot, and fate cannot be evaded. Death is at hand, and I desire to prove my loyalty to the end. I, thy servant Zhuge Liang, dull of parts, was born into a difficult age, and it fell to my lot to guide military operations. I led a northern expedition, but failed to win complete success. Now sickness has laid hold upon me and death approaches, so that I shall be unable to accomplish my task. My sorrow is inexpressible.

“I desire Your Majesty to cleanse your heart and limit your desires, to practice self-control and to love the people, to maintain a perfectly filial attitude toward your late father and to be benevolent to all the world. Seek out the reclusive scholars that you may obtain the services of the wise and good; repel the wicked and depraved that your moral standard may be exalted.

“To my household belong eight hundred mulberry trees and a hundred acres of land; thus there is ample provision for my family. While I have been employed in the service of the state, my needs have been supplied from official sources, but I have not contrived to make any additions to the family estate. At my death I shall not leave any increased possessions, even an excess roll of silk, that may cause Your Majesty to suspect that I have wronged you.”

Having composed this document, the dying man turned again to Yang Yi, saying, “Do not wear mourning for me, but make a large coffer and therein place my body, with seven grains of rice in my mouth. Place a lamp at my feet and let my body move with the army as I was wont to do. If you refrain from mourning, then my leadership star will not fall, for my inmost

soul will ascend and hold it in place. So long as my star retains its place, Sima Yi will be fearful and suspicious.

“Let the army retreat, beginning with the rearmost division; send it away slowly, one camp at a time. If Sima Yi pursues, array the army and offer battle, turn to meet him, and beat the attack. Let him approach till he is very near and then suddenly display the wooden image of myself that I have had carved, seated in my chariot in the midst of the army, with the generals right and left as usual. And you will frighten Sima Yi away.”

Yang Yi listened to these words intently. That night, Zhuge Liang was carried into the open and gazed up at the sky.

“That is my star,” said he, pointing to one that seemed to be losing its brilliancy and to be tottering in its place. Zhuge Liang’s lips moved as if he muttered a spell. Presently, he was borne into his tent and for a time was oblivious of all about him.

When the anxiety caused by this state of coma was at its height, Li Fu arrived.

He wept when he saw the condition of the great leader, crying, “I have foiled the great designs of the state!”

However, presently Zhuge Liang’s eyes reopened and fell upon Li Fu standing near his couch.

“I know your mission,” said Zhuge Liang.

“I came with the royal command to ask also who should control the destinies of the state for the next century,” replied Li Fu. “In my agitation, I forgot to ask that.”

“After me, Jiang Wan is the most fitting man to deal with great matters.”

“And after Jiang Wan?”

“After him, Fei Yi.”

“Who is next after Fei Yi?”

No reply came, and when they looked more carefully, they perceived that the soul of the Prime Minister had passed.

Thus died Zhuge Liang, on the twenty-third day of the eighth month in the twelfth year of Beginning Prosperity, at the age of fifty and four (AD 234).



The poet Du Fu wrote some verses on his death:

A bright star last night falling from the sky,
This message gave, “The Master is no more.”
No more in camps shall bold men tramp at his
command;
At court no statesman ever will fill the place he held;
At home, his clients miss their patron kind;
Sad for the army, who were lonely in this world.
In the green wood, stones and creeks are crying,
No more of his lute, birds have hushed singing.

And Bai Juyi also wrote a poem:

Within the forest dim, the Master lived obscure,
Till, thrice returning, there the prince his mentor met.
As when a fish the ocean gains, desire was filled
Wholly the dragon freed could soar aloft at will.
As king’s son’s guardian none more zealous was;

As minister, most loyally he wrought at court.
His war memorials still to us are left,
And, reading them, the tears unconscious fall.



Now in past days, Commander Liao Li in Changshui had a high opinion of his own abilities and thought himself perfectly fitted to be Zhuge Liang's second. So he neglected the duties of his proper post, showed discontent and indiscipline, and was constantly slandering the minister. Thereupon, Zhuge Liang degraded him and transferred him to Minshan.

When Liao Li heard of Zhuge Liang's death, he shed tears and said, "Then, after all, I shall remain a barbarian!"

Li Yan also grieved deeply at the sad tidings, for he had always hoped that Zhuge Liang would restore him to office and so give him the opportunity of repairing his former faults. After Zhuge Liang had died, he thought there was no hope of reemployment, and so he died.



Another poet, Yuan Weizhi, also wrote in praise of the great adviser:

He fought disorder, helped a weak king;
Most zealously he kept his master's son.
In statecraft he excelled Guan Zhong, Yue Yi,
In warcraft he overpassed Wu Qi, Sun Zi.
With awe the court his war memorials heard,
With majesty his Eight Arrays were planned.
Virtue and wisdom both filled in his heart,

For a thousand autumns, his fame would still stay.

Heaven grieved and Earth mourned on the night of Zhuge Liang's death. Even the moon was dimmed, as Zhuge Liang's soul returned to Heaven.

As the late commander had directed, Jiang Wei and Yang Yi forbade the mourning of his death. His body was placed in the coffer as he had wished, and three hundred of his trusted leaders and soldiers were appointed to watch it.

Secret orders were given to Wei Yan to command the rearguard, and then, one by one, the camps were broken up and the army began its homeward march.

Sima Yi watched the skies. One night, a large, red star with bright rays passed from the northeast to the southwest and dropped over the camps of Shu. It dipped thrice and rose again. Sima Yi heard also a low rumbling in the distance.

He was pleased and excited, and said to those about him, "Zhuge Liang is dead!"

At once, he ordered pursuit with a strong force. But just as he passed his camp gates, doubts filled his mind and he gave up the plan.

"Zhuge Liang is a master of mysteries; he can get aids from the Deities of the Six Layers. It may be that this is but a ruse to get us to take the field. We may fall victims to his guile."

So he halted. But he sent Xiahou Ba with a few dozen scouts to reconnoiter the enemy's camps.

One night, as Wei Yan lay asleep in his tent, he dreamed a dream. In his vision two horns grew out of his head. When he awoke, he was much perplexed to explain his dream.

Marching General Zhao Zhi came to see him, and Wei Yan said, "You are versed in the *Book of Changes*. I have dreamed that two horns grew upon my head, and would trouble you to expound the dream and tell me its portent."

Zhao Zhi thought a moment and replied, "It is an auspicious dream. Dragon and jilin both have horns on the head. It augurs transformation into an ascending creature."

Wei Yan, much pleased, said, "If the dream proves true as you said, I will thank you with very generous gifts."

Zhao Zhi left and presently met Fei Yi, who asked whence he came.

"From the camp of our friend Wei Yan. He dreamed that he grew horns upon his head, and I have given him an auspicious interpretation. But really it is inauspicious. However, I did not wish to annoy him."

"How do you know it is inauspicious?"

"The word for horn is composed of two parts, 'knife' above and 'use' below, and so means that there is a knife upon his head. It is a terrible omen."

"Keep it secret," said Fei Yi.

Then Fei Yi went to the camp of Wei Yan, and when they were alone, he said, "The Prime Minister died last night in the third watch. He left certain final orders, and among them, that you are to command the rearguard to keep Sima Yi at bay while the army retreats. No mourning is to be worn. Here is your authority, so you can march forthwith."

"Who is acting in place of the late minister?" asked Wei Yan.

“The chief command has been delegated to Yang Yi, but the secret plans of campaign have been entrusted to Jiang Wei. This authority was issued from Yang Yi.”

Wei Yan replied, “Though the Prime Minister is dead, I am yet alive. Counselor Yang Yi is only a civil officer and unequal to this post. He ought to conduct the coffin home while I lead the army against Sima Yi. I shall achieve success, and it is wrong to abandon a whole plan of campaign because of the death of one man, even if that be the Prime Minister.”

“The Prime Minister’s orders were to retire, and these orders are to be obeyed.”

“If the Prime Minister had listened to me, we would now have been at Changan. I am the Van Leader, General Who Conquers the West, and Lord of Nanzheng. I am not going to act as rearguard for any civil official,” said Wei Yan, angry.

“It may be as you say, General, but you must not do anything to make us ridiculous. Let me go back to Yang Yi and explain, and I may be able to persuade him to pass onto you the supreme military authority he holds.”

Wei Yan agreed, and Fei Yi went back to the main camp and told Yang Yi what had passed.

Yang Yi replied, “When near death, the Prime Minister confided to me that Wei Yan would turn traitor. I sent him the authority to test him, and now he has discovered himself as the Prime Minister foretold. So I will direct Jiang Wei to command the rearguard.”

The coffer containing the remains of Zhuge Liang was sent on in advance, and Jiang Wei took up his post to cover the retreat.

Meanwhile, Wei Yan sat in his tent waiting for the return of Fei Yi, and was perplexed at the delay. When the suspense became unbearable, he sent

Ma Dai to find out the reason.

Ma Dai returned and told him: "Jiang Wei is covering the retreat, and most of the army has already gone."

Wei Yan was furious.

"How dare he play with me, the pedantic blockhead?" cried he. "But he shall die for this!"

Turning to Ma Dai, Wei Yan said, "Will you help me?"

Ma Dai replied, "I have long hated Yang Yi; certainly I am ready to attack him."

So Wei Yan broke camp and marched southward.

By the time Xiahou Ba had reached the Shu camps, they were all empty, and he hastened back with this news.

"Then Zhuge Liang is really dead! Let us pursue," said Sima Yi, much irritated at being misled.

"Be cautious," said Xiahou Ba. "Send an subordinate leader first."

"No, I must go myself this time."

So Sima Yi and his two sons hastened to the Wuzhang Plains. With shouts and waving flags, they rushed into the camps, only to find them quite deserted.

Sima Yi said to his sons, "You are to bring up the remaining force with all speed, whereas I will lead the vanguard."

Sima Yi hastened in the wake of the retreating army. Coming to some hills, he saw them in the distance and pressed on still harder. Then, suddenly a bomb exploded, a great shout broke the stillness, and the retiring

army turned about and came toward him, ready for battle. In their midst fluttered a great banner bearing the words, "Prime Minister of Han, Lord of Wuxiang, Zhuge Liang."

Sima Yi stopped, pale with fear. Then out from the army came some score of generals of rank, and they were escorting a small carriage, in which sat Zhuge Liang as he had always appeared, in his hand the feather fan.

"Then Zhuge Liang is still alive!" gasped Sima Yi. "And I have rashly placed myself in his power."

As he pulled round his horse to flee, Jiang Wei shouted, "Do not try to run away, O rebel! You have fallen into one of the Prime Minister's traps and had better stay!"

The soldiers, seized with panic, fled, throwing off all their gear. They trampled each other down, and many perished. Their leader galloped fifteen miles without pulling rein. When at last two of his generals came up with him, and had stopped his flying steed by catching at the bridle, Sima Yi clapped his hand to his head, crying, "Have I still a head?"

"Do not fear, Commander, the soldiers of Shu are now far away," they replied.

But he still panted with fear, and only after some time did he recognize that his two companions were Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Hui. The three found their way by byroads to their own camp, whence scouts were sent out in all directions.

In a few days, the natives brought news: "The Shu army had really gone, and as soon as the retiring army entered the valley, they raised a wailing for the dead and hoisted white flags. Zhuge Liang was really dead, and Jiang Wei's rearguard consisted of only one thousand troops. The figure in the carriage was only a wooden image of the Prime Minister."

“While he lived, I could guess what he would do; dead, I was helpless!” said Sima Yi.



The people had a saying that “A dead Zhuge Liang can scare off a live Sima Yi.”

In the depth of night a brilliant star
Fell from the northern sky;
Doubts stayed Sima Yi
When he would pursue
His dead, but fearsome enemy.
And even now the western people,
With scornful smile, will say
“Oh, is my head on my shoulder still?
It was nearly lost today.”



Now, indeed, Sima Yi knew that his rival was no more, so he retook the pursuit. But when he reached the Red Hills, the Shu army had marched too far away.

As he took the homeward road, he said to his officers, “We can now sleep in comfort.”

As they marched back, they saw the camps of their enemies, and were amazed at their skillful arrangement.

“Truly a wonderful genius!” sighed Sima Yi.

The armies of Wei returned to Changan. Leaving officers to guard the various strategic points, Sima Yi himself went on to Luoyang to go into audience.

Yang Yi and Jiang Wei retired slowly and in good order till they neared the Plank Trail, when they donned mourning garb and began to wail for their dead. The soldiers threw themselves on the ground and wailed in sorrow. Some even wailed themselves to death.

But as the leading companies entered upon the Plank Trail, they saw a great blaze in front, and, with a great shout, a cohort came out barring the way. The leaders of the retreating army were taken aback and sent to inform Yang Yi.

The regiments of Wei are nowhere near,
Then who are these soldiers that now appear?

The next chapter will tell who they were.



END OF ACT XXIII

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XXIV:

HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF: THE RISE OF THE SIMA CLAN

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIV

CHAPTER 105

THE LORD OF WUXIANG LEAVES A PLAN IN THE SILKEN BAG; THE
RULER OF WEI REMOVES THE BRONZE STATUE WITH THE DEW
BOWL.

Yang Yi sent forward a man to find out what force this was that stood in his way, and the scout returned to say they were soldiers of Shu led by Wei Yan. Wei Yan had burned the Plank Trail and now barred the way.

Then said Yang Yi, "Just before his death, the Prime Minister foretold that this man would one day turn traitor, and here it has come to pass. I did not expect to meet it thus, but now our road of retreat is cut, and what is to be done?"

Then replied Fei Yi, "He certainly has slandered us to the Emperor and said that we were rebelling, and therefore he has destroyed the wooden roads in order to prevent our progress first. Therefore, we must memorialize to the Throne the truth about him and then plan his destruction."

Jiang Wei said, "I know a byway hereabout that will lead us round to the rear of these covered roads. True, it is precipitous and dangerous, but it will take us to our destination. It is called the Chashan Mountain Path."

So they prepared a memorial and turned off in order to follow the narrow mountain road.

Meanwhile in Chengdu, the Latter Ruler of Shu was troubled; he lost his appetite and was sleepless. Then he dreamed that the Silky Hills that protected his capital were rived and fell. This dream troubled him till morning, when he called in his officers of all ranks to ask them to interpret his vision.

When he had related his dream, Qiao Zhou stood forth and said, "Last night, I saw a large, red star fall from the northeast to the southwest. Surely it forebodes a misfortune to the First Minister. Your Majesty's dream corresponds to what I saw."

The Latter Ruler's anxiety increased. Presently, Li Fu returned and was summoned into the Latter Ruler's presence.

Li Fu bowed his head and wept, saying, "The Prime Minister is dead!"

He repeated Zhuge Liang's last messages and told all that he knew.

The Latter Ruler was overcome with great sorrow, and wailed, crying, "Heaven smites me!"

And he fell over and lay upon his couch. They led him within to the inner chambers, and when Empress Wu, the Empress Dowager, heard the sad tidings, she also wailed without ceasing. And all the officers were distressed and wept, and the common people showed their grief.

The Latter Ruler was deeply affected, and for many days could hold no court. And while thus prostrate with grief, they told him that Wei Yan had sent up a memorial charging Yang Yi with rebellion. The astounded courtiers went to the Latter Ruler's chamber to talk over this thing, and Empress Wu was also there. The memorial was read aloud. It was much like this:

"I, thy Minister and General, Wei Yan, General Who Conquers the West and Lord of Nanzheng, humbly and with bowed head write

that Yang Yi has assumed command of the army and is in rebellion. He has made off with the coffin of the late Prime Minister and wishes to lead enemies within our borders. As a precaution, and to hinder his progress, I have burned the Plank Trail and now report these matters.”

The Latter Ruler said, “Wei Yan is a valiant warrior and could easily have overcome Yang Yi. Why, then, did he destroy the Plank Trail?”

Empress Wu said, “The First Ruler used to say that Zhuge Liang knew that treachery lurked in the heart of Wei Yan, and he wished to deal with Wei Yan; he only spared Wei Yan because Wei Yan is a valiant and committed leader. We should not believe too readily this tale of his that Yang Yi has rebelled. Yang Yi is a scholar and a civil officer, and the late Prime Minister placed him in a position of great responsibility, thereby proving that he trusted and valued Yang Yi. If we believe this statement, surely Yang Yi will be forced to go over to Wei. Nothing should be done without due meditation.”

As they were discussing this matter, an urgent memorial came from Yang Yi, and opening it, they read:

“I, Yang Yi, leader of the retreating army, humbly and with trepidation, present this memorial. In his last moments, the late Prime Minister made over to me the charge of the great enterprise, and bade me carry out his plan without change. I have respected his charge. I ordered Wei Yan to command the rearguard with Jiang Wei as his second. But Wei Yan refused obedience and led away his own army into Hanzhong. Then he burned the Plank Trail, tried to steal away the body of the late Commander-in-Chief, and behaved altogether unseemly. His rebellion came upon me suddenly and unexpectedly. I send this memorial in haste.”

The Empress Dowager listened to the end.

Then, turning to the officers, she said, "What is your opinion now?"

Jiang Wan replied, "Yang Yi is hasty and intolerant, but he has rendered great services in supplying the army. He has long been a trusted colleague of the late Prime Minister, who, being near his end, entrusted to him the conduct of affairs. Certainly, he is no rebel.

"On the other hand, Wei Yan is bold and ambitious and thinks himself everybody's superior. Yang Yi is the only one who has openly been of different opinion, and hence Wei Yan hates him. When he saw Yang Yi placed over his head in command of the army, Wei Yan refused his support. Then Wei Yan burned the Plank Trail in order to cut off Yang Yi's retreat, and maligned him, hoping to bring about his fall. I am ready to guarantee Yang Yi's fealty to the extent of my whole house, but I would not answer for Wei Yan."

Dong Yun followed, "Wei Yan has always been conceited and discontented. His mouth was full of hate and resentment, and only fear of the late Prime Minister held him in check. The Prime Minister's death gave him his opportunity, and he turned traitor. This is certainly the true state of the case. Yang Yi is able, and his employment by the late Prime Minister is proof of his loyalty."

"If this is true and Wei Yan is really a rebel, what should be done?" asked the Latter Ruler.

Jiang Wan said, "I think the late Prime Minister has framed some scheme by which to get rid of Wei Yan. If Yang Yi had not felt secure, he would scarcely have set out to return through the valleys. Your Majesty may feel sure that Wei Yan will fall into some trap. We have received, almost at the same time, two memorials from two men, each bringing against the other a charge of rebellion. Let us wait."

In a short time, another memorial arrived from Wei Yan, who accused Yang Yi of rebellion. The Latter Ruler was reading it, when a messenger from Yang Yi was announced with yet another memorial labeling Wei Yan a rebel. The court received several more memorials from both sides blaming each other, and the officials did not know what to do.

Just then Fei Yi arrived. He was summoned into the royal presence and told the story of Wei Yan's revolt.

The Latter Ruler replied, "In that case, I should do well to send Dong Yun with the ensigns of authority to mediate the situation and attempt to persuade Wei Yan with kind words."

So Dong Yun left on this mission.

At this time, Wei Yan was camped at Nangu Valley, which was a commanding position. He thought his plan was succeeding well. It had not occurred to him that Yang Yi and Jiang Wei could get past him by any byway.

On the other hand, Yang Yi, thinking that Hanzhong was lost, sent He Ping with three thousand troops on in front while he followed with the coffin.

When He Ping had got to the rear of Nangu Valley, they announced their presence with rolling drums. The scouts quickly told Wei Yan, who at once armed himself, took his sword, and rode out to confront He Ping. When both sides were arrayed, He Ping rode to the front and began to revile his opponent.

"Where is that rebel Wei Yan?" cried He Ping.

“You aided that traitor Yang Yi!” cried Wei Yan, no way backward with his tongue. “How dare you abuse me?”

He Ping waxed more indignant. “You rebelled immediately after the late chief’s death, before even his body was cold. How could you?”

Then shaking his whip at the followers of Wei Yan, He Ping cried, “And you soldiers are Shu people. Your fathers and mothers, wives and children, and your friends are still in the land. Were you treated unkindly that you have joined a traitor and aid his wicked schemes? You ought to have returned home and awaited quietly the rewards that would have been yours.”

The soldiers were touched by his words. They cheered, and more than a half ran away.

Wei Yan was now raging. He whirled up his sword and galloped forward straight for He Ping, who went to meet him with his spear ready. They fought several bouts, and then He Ping rode away as if defeated. Wei Yan followed, but He Ping’s troops began to shoot and Wei Yan was driven backward. As he got near his own ranks, Wei Yan saw many generals leaving their companies and going away. He rode after them and cut some of them down. But this did not stay the movement; they continued to go. The only steady portion of his own army was that commanded by Ma Dai. They stood their ground.

“Will you really help me?” said Wei Yan. “I will surely remember you on the day of success.”

The two then went in pursuit of He Ping, who fled before them. However, it was soon evident that He Ping was not to be overtaken, and the pursuers halted. Wei Yan mustered his now-small force.

“What if we go over to Wei?” said Wei Yan.

“I think your words unwise,” said Ma Dai. “Why should we join anyone? A really strong person would try to carve out his own fortune and not be ready to crook the knee to another. You are far more able and brave than any leader in the River Lands. No one would dare to stand up to you. I pledge myself to go with you to the seizure of Hanzhong, and thence we will attack the West River Land.”

So they marched together toward Nanzheng, where Jiang Wei stationed. From the city wall, Jiang Wei saw their approach and marked their proud, martial look. He ordered the drawbridge to be raised and sent to tell his colleague, Yang Yi.

As they drew near, both Wei Yan and Ma Dai shouted out, “Surrender!”

In spite of the smallness of their following, Jiang Wei felt that Ma Dai acting with Wei Yan was a dangerous combination, and he wanted the advice of Yang Yi.

“Wei Yan is valorous, and he is obtaining the help of Ma Dai. How shall we repel them?” asked Jiang Wei.

Yang Yi replied, “Just before his death, the Prime Minister gave me a silken bag, which he said I was to open when Wei Yan’s mutiny reached a critical point. It contains a plan to rid ourselves of this traitor, and it seems that now is the moment to see what should be done.”

So Yang Yi opened the bag and drew forth the letter it held. On the cover, he read:

“To be opened when Wei Yan is actually arrayed opposite you.”

Said Jiang Wei, “As this has all been arranged for, I had better go out, and when his line is formed, then you can come forth.”

Jiang Wei donned his armor, took his spear, and rode out, with three thousand troops. They marched out of the city gates with the drums beating. The array completed, Jiang Wei took his place under the great standard and opened with a volley of abuse.

“Rebel Wei Yan, the late Prime Minister never harmed you. Why have you turned traitor?”

Wei Yan reined up, lowered his sword, and replied, “Friend Jiang Wei, this is no concern of yours. Tell Yang Yi to come.”

Now Yang Yi was also beneath the standard, but hidden. He opened the letter, and the words therein seemed to please him, for he rode forward blithely.

Presently he reined in, pointed to Wei Yan, and said, “The Prime Minister foresaw your mutiny and bade me be on my guard. Now if you are able thrice to shout, ‘Who dares kill me?’, then you will be a real hero, and I will yield to you the whole of Hanzhong.”

Wei Yan laughed. “Listen, you old fool! While Zhuge Liang lived, I feared him somewhat. But he is dead, and no one dares stand before me. I will not only shout the words thrice, but a myriad times. Why not?”

Wei Yan raised his sword, shook his bridle, and shouted, “Who dares kill me?”

He never finished. Behind him, someone shouted savagely, “I dare!” and at the same moment, Wei Yan fell dead, cut down by Ma Dai.

This was the denouement and was the secret entrusted to Ma Dai just before Zhuge Liang’s death. Wei Yan was to be made to shout these words and slain when he least expected it. Yang Yi knew what was to happen, as it was written in the letter in the silken bag.



A poem says:

Zhuge Liang foresaw: when freed from his restraint
Wei Yan would traitor prove. The silken bag
Contained the plan for his undoing. We see
How it succeeded when the moment came.



So before Dong Yun had reached Nanzheng, Wei Yan was dead. Ma Dai joined his army to Jiang Wei's, and Yang Yi wrote another memorial, which he sent to the Latter Ruler.

The Latter Ruler issued an edict:

“Wei Yan had paid the penalty of his crime. He should be honorably buried in consideration of his former services.”

Then Yang Yi continued his journey and in due time arrived at Chengdu with the coffin of the late Prime Minister. The Latter Ruler led out a large cavalcade of officers to meet the body at a point seven miles from the walls, and he lifted up his voice and wailed for the dead, and with him wailed all the officers and the common people, so that the sound of mourning filled the whole earth.

By royal command, the body was borne into the city to the palace of the Prime Minister, and his son Zhuge Zhan was chief mourner.

When next the Latter Ruler held a court, Yang Yi bound himself, and confessed he had been in fault.

The Latter Ruler bade them loose his bonds and said, “Noble Sir, the coffin would never have reached home but for you. You carried out the orders of the late Prime Minister, whereby Wei Yan was destroyed and all was made secure. This was all your doing.”

Yang Yi was promoted to be the Instructor of the Center Army, and Ma Dai was rewarded with the rank that Wei Yan had forfeited.

Yang Yi presented Zhuge Liang’s testament, which the Latter Ruler read, weeping. By a special edict, it was commanded that soothsayers should cast lots and select the site for the tomb of the great servant of the state.

Then Fei Yi said to the Latter Ruler, “When nearing his end, the Prime Minister commanded that he should be buried on Dingjun Mountain, in open ground, without sacrifice or monument.”

This wish was respected, and they chose a propitious day in the tenth month for the interment, and the Latter Ruler followed in the funeral procession to the grave on Dingjun Mountain. The posthumous title conferred upon the late Prime Minister was Zhuge Liang the Loyally Martial, and a temple was built in Mianyang wherein were offered sacrifices at the four seasons.



The poet Du Fu wrote a poem:

To Zhuge Liang stands a great memorial hall,
In cypress shade, outside the Chengdu Wall,
The steps thereto are bright with new grass springing,
Hiding among the branches orioles are singing.

The people and army asked for his wisdom,
Upon the throne, built for the father, sat the son.
But ere was compassed all his plans conceived
He died; and heroes since for him have ever grieved.

Another poem by the same author says:

Zhuge Liang's fair fame stands clear to all the world;
Among king's ministers he surely takes
Exalted rank; for when the empire cleft
In three, a kingdom for his lord he won
By subtle craft. Throughout all time he stands
A shining figure, clear against the sky.
Akin was he to famous Yi Yin, Lu Wang,
Yet stands with chiefs, like Xiao He, Cao Shen;
The fates forbade that Han should be restored,
War-worn and weary, yet he steadfast stood.

Evil tidings came to the Latter Ruler on his return to his capital. He heard that Quan Zong had marched out with a large army from Wu and camped at the entrance to Baqiu. No one knew the object of this expedition.

“Here is Wu breaking their oath, just as the Prime Minister has died,” cried the Latter Ruler. “What can we do?”

Then said Jiang Wan, “My advice is to send Wang Ping and Zhang Ni to camp at Baidicheng as a measure of precaution, while you send an envoy to Wu to announce the death and period of mourning. He can there observe the signs of the times.”

“The envoy must have a ready tongue,” said the Latter Ruler.

One stepped from the ranks of courtiers and offered himself. He was Zong Yu, a man of Nanyang, a Military Adviser. So he was appointed as envoy with the commissions of announcing the death of the Prime Minister and observing the conditions.

Zong Yu set out for Capital Jianye, arrived, and was taken into the Emperor’s presence. When the ceremony of introduction was over and the envoy looked about him, he saw that all were dressed in mourning.

But Sun Quan’s countenance wore a look of anger, and he said, “Wu and Shu are one house. Why has your master increased the guard at Baidicheng?”

Zong Yu replied, “It seemed as necessary for the west to increase the garrison there as for the east to have a force at Baqiu. Neither is worth asking about.”

“As an envoy you seem no way inferior to Deng Zhi,” said Sun Quan, smiling.

Sun Quan continued, “When I heard that your Prime Minister Zhuge Liang had gone to Heaven, I wept daily and ordered my officers to wear mourning garb. I feared that Wei might take the occasion to attack Shu, and so I increased the garrison at Baqiu by ten thousand troops that I might be able to help you in case of need. That was my sole reason.”

Zong Yu bowed and thanked the Ruler of Wu.

“I would not go back upon the pledge between us,” said Sun Quan.

Zong Yu said, “I have been sent to inform you of the mourning for the late Prime Minister.”

Sun Quan took up a gold-tipped arrow and snapped it in twain, saying, “If I betray my oath, may my posterity be cut off!”

Then the Ruler of Wu dispatched an envoy with incense and silk and other gifts to be offered in sacrifice to the dead in the land of Shu.

Zong Yu and the envoy took leave of the Ruler of Wu and journeyed to Chengdu, where they went to the Latter Ruler.

Zong Yu made a memorial, saying, "The Ruler of Wu has wept for our Prime Minister and put his court into mourning. The increased garrison at Baqiu is intended to safeguard us from Wei, lest they take the occasion of a public sorrow to attack. And in token of his pledge, the Ruler of Wu broke an arrow in twain."

The Latter Ruler was pleased and rewarded Zong Yu. Moreover, the envoy of Wu was generously treated.

According to the advice in Zhuge Liang's testament, the Latter Ruler made Jiang Wan Prime Minister and Chair of the Secretariat, while Fei Yi became Deputy Prime Minister and Deputy Chair of the Secretariat. Wu Yi was made Commander of the Flying Cavalry and Commander of Hanzhong; Jiang Wei, General Who Upholds the Han, Lord of Pingxiang, Commander-in-Chief, and Commander of Hanzhong.

Now as Yang Yi was senior in service to Jiang Wan, who had thus been promoted over his head, and as he considered his services had been inadequately rewarded, he was discontented and spoke resentfully.

He said to Fei Yi, "If, when the Prime Minister died, I had gone over to Wei with the whole army, I should not have been thus left out in the cold."

Fei Yi secretly reported this speech to the Latter Ruler, who was angered and threw Yang Yi into prison.

The Latter Ruler intended putting him to death, but Jiang Wan interceded, saying, “Yang Yi had followed the late Prime Minister in many campaigns and had had many good services. Your Majesty should not put him to death, but take away his rank.”

And Yang Yi was reprieved. However, he was degraded and sent into Hanjia in Hanzhong, where he committed suicide through shame.

In the thirteenth year of Beginning Prosperity of Shu, the same year being the third year of Green Dragon of Wei, and the fourth year of Domestic Peace of Wu (AD 235), there were no military expeditions. In Wei, Sima Yi was created Grand Commander, with command over all the forces of Wei, and he departed for Luoyang.

The Ruler of Wei, at Xuchang, made preparations to build himself a palace complex. At Luoyang, he also built the Hall of Sunrise, the Hall of the Firmament, and the Hall of Complete Patterns, all lofty and of beautiful designs. He also raised a Hall of Beautiful Passions, a Green Flageolet Tower, and a Phoenix Tower. He also dug a Nine-Dragons Pool. Over all these works, he placed Doctorate Scholar Ma Jun as superintendent of their building.

Nothing was spared that would contribute to the beauty of these buildings. The beams were carved, the rafters were painted, the walls were of golden bricks, and the roofs of green tiles. They glittered and glowed in the sunlight. The most cunning craftspeople in the world were sought, many thousands of them, and myriads of ordinary workers labored day and night on these works for the Emperor’s glory and pleasure. But the strength of the

people was spent in this toil, and they cried aloud and complained unceasingly.

Moreover, the Ruler of Wei issued an edict to carry earth and bring trees for the Fragrant Forest Park, and he employed officers of state in these labors, carrying earth and transporting trees.

The Minister of Works, Dong Xun, ventured upon a remonstrance, sending a memorial:

“From the beginning of the Rebuilt Tranquility Era, a generation ago, wars have been continuous and destruction rife. Those who have escaped death are few, and these are old and weak. Now indeed it may be that the palaces are too small and enlargement is desired, but would it not be more fitting to choose the building season so as not to interfere with cultivation? Your Majesty has always valued many honorable officers, letting them wear beautiful headdresses, clad in handsome robes, and riding in decorated chariots to distinguish them from the common people. Now these officers are being made to carry timber and bear earth, to sweat and soil their feet. To destroy the glory of the state in order to raise a useless edifice is indescribable folly. Confucius the Teacher said that princes should treat ministers with polite consideration, and ministers should serve princes with loyalty. Without loyalty, without propriety, can a state endure?

“I recognize that these words of mine mean death, but I am of no value, a mere bullock’s hair, and my life is of no importance, as my death would be no loss. I write with tears, bidding the world farewell.

“Thy servant has eight sons, who will be a burden to Your Majesty after his death. I cannot say with what trepidation I await my

fate.”

“Has the man no fear of death?” said Cao Rui, greatly angered.

The courtiers requested the Emperor to put Dong Xun to death, but Cao Rui remembered his rectitude and proven loyalty and only degraded him, adding a warning to put to death those who would remonstrate.

A certain Zhang Mao, in the service of the Heir Apparent, also ventured upon a remonstrance. Cao Rui put him to death immediately.

Then Cao Rui summoned his Master of Works, Ma Jun, and said, “I have built high terraces and lofty towers with intent to hold intercourse with gods and goddesses, that I may obtain from them the elixir of life.”

Then, Ma Jun replied, “Of the four and twenty emperors of the line of Latter Han, only Emperor Wu enjoyed the throne very long and really attained to old age. That was because he drank of the essence of the brilliancy of the sun and the brightness of the moon. In the Palace at Changan is the Terrace of Cypress Beams, upon which stands the bronze figure of a man holding up a Dew Bowl, whereinto distills, in the third watch of the night, the vapor from the great constellation of the north. This liquid is called Celestial Elixir, or Sweet Dew. If mingled with powdered jade and swallowed, it restores youth to the aged.”

“Take workers to Changan immediately and bring hither the bronze figure to set up in the Fragrant Forest Park,” said the Ruler of Wei.

As the Ruler of Wei commanded, they took ten thousand workers to Changan, and they built a scaffold around the figure. Then they attached ropes to haul it down. The terrace being two hundred feet high and the pedestal ten cubits in circumference, Ma Jun bade his laborers first detach the bronze image. They did so and brought it down. Its eyes were moist as with tears, and the workers were affrighted.

Then suddenly, beside the terrace sprang up a whirlwind, with dust and pebbles flying thick as a shower of rain, and there was a tempestuous roar as of an earthquake. Down fell the pedestal, and the platform crumbled, crushing a thousand people to death.

However, the bronze figure and the golden bowl were conveyed to Luoyang and presented to the Emperor.

“Where is the pedestal?” asked the Ruler of Wei.

“It is too heavy to transport,” replied Ma Jun. “It weighs a million-and-half pounds.”

Wherefore, the Ruler of Wei ordered the pillar to be broken up and the metal brought, and from this he caused to be cast two figures which he named the Saints of Wengzhong. They were placed outside the gate of the Board of War. A pair of dragons and a pair of phoenixes were also cast, the dragons forty feet high and the birds thirty. These were placed in front of the Hall of Audience.

Moreover, in the Fragrant Forest Park, the Ruler of Wei planted wonderful flowers and rare trees, and he also established a menagerie of strange animals.

Yang Fu, Assistant Imperial Guardian, remonstrated with the Emperor on these extravagances in a memorial:

“As is well known, King Yao preferred his humble thatched cottage, and all the world enjoyed tranquility; King Yu contented himself with a small, modest palace, and all the empire rejoiced. In the days of the Shang and Zhou Dynasties, the hall of the ruler stood three feet above the usual height, and its area was nine mats. The sage emperors and illustrious kings had no decorated chambers in lofty

palaces built with the wealth, and by the strength, of a worn-out and despoiled people.

“Emperor Jie built a jade chamber and elephant stables; Emperor Zhou erected a surpassingly beautiful palace complex and a Deer Terrace. But these lost the empire. King Ling of Chu built beautiful palaces, but he came to an evil end. The First Emperor of Qin made the Epang Palace, but calamity fell upon his son, for the empire rebelled and his house was exterminated in the second generation.

“All those who have failed to consider the means of the people and given way to sensuous pleasures have perished. Your Majesty has the examples of Kings Yao, Yu, Shun, and Tang on the one hand, and the warnings of Kings Jie, Zhou, Ling, and the First Emperor on the other. To seek only self-indulgence and think only of fine palaces will surely end in calamity.

“The prince is the first and the head; his ministers are his limbs; they live or die together, they are involved in the same destruction. Though I am timorous, if I dared forget my duty, or failed to speak firmly, I should be unable to move Your Majesty. Now I have prepared my coffin and bathed my body, ready for the most condign punishment.”

But the Ruler of Wei disregarded this memorial and only urged on the rapid completion of the terrace. Thereon, he set up the bronze figure with the golden bowl. Moreover, he sent forth a command to select the most beautiful women in the empire for his garden of delight. Many memorials were presented, but the Ruler of Wei heeded them not.

Now the Consort of the Ruler of Wei was of the Mao family of Henei. In earlier days, when he was a prince, he had loved her exceedingly, and when he succeeded to the Throne, she became Empress Mao. Later, he favored Lady Guo, and his Consort Mao was neglected. Lady Guo was beautiful and clever, and the Ruler of Wei delighted in her. He neglected state affairs for her society and often spent a month at a time in retirement with her. Every day, there was some new gaiety.

In the spring, when the plants in the Fragrant Forest Park were in flower, the Ruler of Wei and Lady Guo came to the garden to enjoy them and to feast.

“Why not invite the Empress?” asked Lady Guo.

“If she came, nothing would pass my lips,” replied the Ruler of Wei.

He gave orders that his Consort should be kept in ignorance of these rejoicings.

But when a month passed without the appearance of the Emperor, Empress Mao and her ladies went to the Blue Flower Pavilion to entertain themselves. Hearing music, she asked who was providing it, and they told her that the Emperor and Lady Guo were feasting on the grounds.

That day, Empress Mao returned to her palace filled with sorrow. Next day, she went out in her carriage and saw the Emperor on a veranda.

“Yesterday, Your Majesty was walking in the north garden, and you had plenty of music, too,” said she, smiling.

Cao Rui was wroth and sent for all the attendants. He upbraided them with disobedience, saying, “I had forbidden you to tell things to the Empress, and you disobeyed my command.”

With this, he put them all to death. Empress Mao feared and returned to her palace.

Then an edict appeared forcing Empress Mao to commit suicide and raising Lady Guo to be Empress in her place. And no officer dared to utter a remonstrance.

Just after this, the Imperial Protector of Youzhou, Guanqiu Jian, sent in a memorial, saying: “Gongsun Yuan of Liaodong has risen in revolt, assumed the style of Prince of Yan, and adopted a reign title of Extending Han. Gongsun Yuan has built himself a Palace, established an administration of his own, and is disturbing the whole north with plundering.”

A council met to consider this memorial.

Within, officials labor at ignoble tasks, and mean;
Without, the glint of weapons on the border may be
seen.

How the insurgents were attacked will be related in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIV

CHAPTER 106

SUFFERING DEFEAT, GONGSUN YUAN MEETS HIS DEATH; PRETENDING ILLNESS, SIMA YI DECEIVES CAO SHUANG.

This Gongsun Yuan was a grandson of Gongsun Du the Warlike, and a son of Gongsun Kang in Liaodong. In the twelfth year of Rebuilt Tranquility, when Cao Cao was pursuing Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang, who had fled eastward, Gongsun Kang had captured them, beheaded them, and sent their heads to Cao Cao. For this service, Gongsun Kang received the title of Lord of Xiangping. After Gongsun Kang's death, as his two sons, Gongsun Huang and Gongsun Yuan, were young, his brother Gongsun Gong took the chieftainship; and Cao Pi, beside confirming the lordship, gave him the rank of General of the Flying Cavalry.

In the second year of Calm Peace (AD 228), the second son, Gongsun Yuan, being now grown-up, well-educated and trained in military exercises, obstinate and fond of fighting, took away his uncle's power and ruled the heritage of his father. Cao Rui conferred upon him the title of General Who Wields Ferocity, and made him Governor of Liaodong.

Then the Ruler of Wu, Sun Quan, anxious to secure Gongsun Yuan's support, sent two envoys, Zhang Mi and Xu Yan, with gifts of gold and gems and pearls and offered Gongsun Yuan the title of Prince of Yan. Fearing that the Middle Land would resent any dallying with Wu, Gongsun Yuan slew the Wu envoys and sent the heads to the Ruler of Wei. For this proof of fealty, Cao Rui gave him the title of Grand General and the Dukedom of Yuelang.

However, Gongsun Yuan was dissatisfied, and his thoughts turned toward independence. He took council with his officers and proposed to style himself Prince of Yan and to adopt a reign-title of Extending Han, the first year.

One general, Jia Fan, opposed this and said, “My lord, the central authorities have treated you well and honored you. I fear that Sima Yi is too skillful a leader for rebellion to succeed. You see even Zhuge Liang cannot defeat him. How much less can you?”

Gongsun Yuan’s reply was to condemn Jia Fan to death. However, Adviser Lun Zhi ventured upon further remonstrance.

“Jia Fan spoke well. The Sacred One says that extraordinary phenomena presage the destruction of a state. Now at this time, portents are not wanting, and wonders have been seen. A dog, dressed in red and wearing a turban, went up to the roof, walking like a man. Moreover, while a certain person living in a village south of the city was cooking his food, he saw a child in the pan, boiled to death. A great cave opened near the marketplace and threw out a large, fleshy body, completely human save that it lacked limbs. Swords could not cut it; arrows could not penetrate it. No one knew what to call it; when they consulted the soothsayers, they obtained the reply, ‘Incomplete shape, silent mouth: a state is near destruction.’ These prodigies are all inauspicious. Flee from evil and strive to walk in fair fortune’s way. Make no move without most careful thought.”

This second remonstrance enraged Gongsun Yuan still more, and he sent Lun Zhi to death with Jia Fan. Both were executed in the public place.

Gongsun Yuan then prepared to make a bid for empire. He raised an army of one hundred fifty thousand and appointed Bei Yan as Commander and Yang Zuo as Leader of the Van. This army set out for the Middle Land.

The Ruler of Wei was alarmed at the report of this rising and sent for Sima Yi.

Sima Yi was not greatly perturbed and said, "My forty thousand troops will be equal to the task."

The Ruler of Wei replied, "The task is heavy, for your troops are few and the road is long."

"The strength of an army is not in numbers, but in strategy. Aided by Your Majesty's good fortune, I shall certainly be able to bring this fellow Gongsun Yuan a captive to your feet."

"What do you think will be the rebel's plan?" asked the Ruler of Wei.

"His high plan would be flight before our army can arrive; his middle plan would be defending his position in Liaodong; his low plan would be to try to hold Xiangping. In the last case, I shall certainly capture him."

"How long will the expedition take?"

"We have to cover one thousand five hundred miles, which will take a hundred days. Attack will consume another hundred. The return will need a hundred, and with sixty days to rest, we shall take a year."

"Suppose during that year we are attacked by Wu or Shu."

"My plans provide for that. Your Majesty need have no anxiety."

The Ruler of Wei being thus reassured, formally ordered Sima Yi to undertake the expedition.

Hu Zun was appointed to lead the van. Hu Zun went and camped in Liaodong. The scouts hastened to tell Gongsun Yuan, who sent Bei Yan and Yang Zuo to camp at Liaosui with eighty thousand troops. They surrounded

their camp with a wall seven miles in circumference and placed thorny barriers outside the rampart. It seemed very secure.

Hu Zun saw these preparations and sent to tell his chief. Sima Yi smiled.

“So the rebel does not want to fight, but thinks to weary my soldiers,” said Sima Yi. “Now I am disposed to think that most of his army is within that wall, so that his stronghold is empty and undefended. I will make a dash at Xiangping. He will have to go to its rescue, and I will smite him on the way. I should score a great success.”

So Sima Yi hastened to Xiangping along unfrequented ways.

Meanwhile, Bei Yan and Yang Zuo, the two generals within the walled camp, discussed their plans.

Yang Zuo said, “When the Wei army comes near, we will not fight. They will have come a long march and their supplies will be short, so that they cannot hold out long. When they retreat, we shall find our opportunity. These were the tactics Sima Yi used against Zhuge Liang on River Wei, and Zhuge Liang died before the end of the expedition. We will try similar means.”

Presently, the scouts reported that the Wei army had marched south.

Bei Yan at once saw the danger and said, “They are going to attack Xiangping, which they know has few troops. If that base be lost, this position is useless.”

So they broke up their camp and followed the enemy.

When Sima Yi heard it, he rejoiced, saying, “Now they will fall into the snare I have laid for them.”

Sima Yi sent Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei to take up position on the River Ji. They were to attack if the army of Liaodong came near them. They had not long to wait. As soon as Bei Yan and his army approached, Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei exploded a bomb, beat the drums, waved their flags, and came out, one force on each side. Bei Yan and Yang Zuo made a fight but soon fled to Shoushan Mountain, where they fell in with Gongsun Yuan and joined the main army. Then they turned to give battle to the Wei army.

Bei Yan rode to the front and reviled the enemy, shouting, “You rebels! Do not try trickery, but dare you fight in the open?”

Xiahou Ba rode out to accept the challenge, and after a few bouts, Bei Yan fell. In the confusion caused by the death of their leader, Xiahou Ba urged on his troops and drove Gongsun Yuan back to Xiangping, and Gongsun Yuan took refuge in the city.

The city was surrounded. It was autumn, and the rain fell day after day without ceasing. At the end of the month, the plain was under three feet of water, so that the grain boats sailed straight from River Ji to the city walls. The besiegers suffered much from the floods.

Pei Jing, Commander of the Left, went to Sima Yi and asked, “The rain keeps pouring down, and tents cannot be pitched on mud. May the army be moved to camp on the higher ground?”

But Sima Yi flouted the suggestion. “How can the army move away just when success is in sight? The rebels will be conquered now any day. If any other speaks about drawing off, he will be put to death.”

Pei Jing agreed and went away.

Soon after, Chou Lian, Commander of the Right, came to see his chief and repeated the suggestion, saying, "The soldiers are suffering from the rains. O Commander, let them camp on the hills."

Sima Yi got angry and said, "I have sent the command, and you are against it!"

And he ordered Chou Lian to be executed. His head was suspended at the camp gate as a warning to others. The soldiers dared not complain anymore.

Then Sima Yi ordered the south camp to be abandoned, and the army marched seven miles south, thus allowing the soldiers and people in the city to come out to gather fuel and pasture their cattle.

The attacking army could not understand this move, and General Chen Qun spoke about it.

"When you besieged Shangyong, O Commander, you attacked all round at eight points, and the city fell in eight days. Meng Da was taken, and you won a great success. Now, your forty thousand troops have borne their armors many days over long marches, and you do not press the attack but keep them in the mud and mire and let the enemy gather supplies and feed their cattle. I do not know what your intention may be."

"Sir," replied the Commander-in-Chief, "I see you are ignorant of war, after all. You do not understand the different conditions. Meng Da then had ample supplies and few troops, while we were under exactly opposite conditions. So we had to attack vigorously and at once. The suddenness of the attack defeated the enemy. But look at present conditions. The Liaodong troops are many and we few; they are on the verge of starvation, and we are full-fed. Why should we force the attack? Our line is to let the soldiers desert and capture the city. Therefore I leave a gate open and the road free that they may run away."

Chen Qun then understood and acknowledged the correctness of the strategy. Sima Yi sent to Luoyang to hasten supplies, that there should be no shortage.

However, the war was not supported in the capital, for when the messenger arrived and the Ruler of Wei summoned his courtiers, they said, "In Liaodong the rain has been continuous for a month, and the soldiers are in misery. Sima Yi ought to be recalled, and the war renewed at a more convenient season."

The Ruler of Wei replied, "The leader of our army is most capable and best able to decide upon what should be done. He understands the conditions and is teeming with magnificent plans. He will certainly succeed. Wherefore, Noble Sirs, wait a few days and let us not be anxious about the result."

So Cao Rui heeded not the voice of the dissentients, but took care that provisions were sent.

After a few days, the rain ceased, and fine, clear weather followed. That night, Sima Yi went out of his tent that he might study the sky. Suddenly, he saw a very large and bright star start from a point over Shoushan Mountain and travel over toward Xiangping, where it fell. The soldiers were rather frightened at this apparition, but the leader rejoiced.

"Five days from now, Gongsun Yuan will be slain where that star fell," said he. "Therefore, attack with vigor."

They opened the attack the next morning at dawn, throwing up banks and sapping the walls, setting up stone-throwing machines and rearing

ladders. When night came, the attack did not cease. Arrows fell in the city like pelting rain.

Within the city, grain began to run short, and soon there was none. They slaughtered bullocks and horses for food. The soldiers began to be mutinous and no longer fought with any spirit. There was talk of slaying Gongsun Yuan and yielding the city.

Gongsun Yuan was disheartened and frightened, and decided to sue for peace. He sent his Prime Minister Wang Jian and Imperial Censor Liu Fei out of the city to beg Sima Yi to allow him to submit. These two had to be let down from the walls by ropes, as no other means of exit were possible.

Wang Jian and Liu Fei found their way to Sima Yi and said, “We pray you, O Commander, retire seven miles and allow the officers to come forth and surrender.”

“Why did not Gongsun Yuan himself come?” said Sima Yi. “He is rude.”

He put the two envoys to death and sent their heads back into the city.

Gongsun Yuan was still more alarmed, but he resolved to make one more attempt. This time he sent High Counselor Wei Yin as his envoy. Sima Yi received this messenger sitting in state in his tent, with his officers standing right and left. Wei Yin approached on his knees, and when he reached the door of the tent recited his petition.

“I pray you, O Commander, turn your thunderous wrath from us. We will send the son of our leader, Gongsun Xiu, the Heir Apparent, as hostage, and all the officers shall appear before you bound with cords.”

Sima Yi replied, “There are five possible operations for any army. If you can fight, fight; if you cannot fight, defend; if you cannot defend, flee; if you cannot flee, surrender; if you cannot surrender, die. These five

courses are open to you, and a hostage would be useless. Now return and tell your master.”

Wei Yin put his hands over his head and fled like a rat. He went into the city and related what had happened to him.

The Gongsuns, father and son, resolved to flee. They chose a thousand mounted troops and, in the dead of night, opened the south gate and got out. They took the road to the east and were rejoiced to find it clear.

All went well for a distance of three miles, when a bomb exploded. This was followed by a roll of drums and the blare of trumpets, and a cohort stood in the way. The leader was Sima Yi, supported by his two sons, Sima Shi and Sima Zhao.

“Stop, O rebel!” cried the sons.

But Gongsun Yuan lashed his steed to a gallop. Then Hu Zun, Xiahou Ba, Xiahou Wei, Zhang Hu, and Yue Chen, with their troops, came up and quickly surrounded them so that they were helpless. Gongsun Yuan saw that escape was impossible, so he came with his son, dismounted, and offered surrender.

Sima Yi hardly looked at the two men, but he turned to his officers and said, “That night, the star fell to this land, and today, five days later, the omen becomes true.”

They all felicitated him, saying, “The Commander is superhuman!”

Gongsun Yuan and Gongsun Xiu were slain where they stood. Then Sima Yi turned to resume the siege of Xiangping, but before he had reached the walls, Hu Zun’s army had entered. Sima Yi went in and was received with great respect, the people burning incense as he passed. He went to the residence, and then the whole of Gongsun Yuan’s clan, and all who had

assisted in his uprising, were beheaded. They counted heads to the number of seventy.

The city taken and the rebels destroyed, Sima Yi issued a proclamation in order to restore confidence among the people.

Certain persons told him, "Jia Fan and Lun Zhi had been against the revolt and had therefore suffered death."

So Sima Yi honored their tombs and conferred ranks upon their children. The contents of the treasury were distributed among the soldiers as rewards, and then the army marched back to Luoyang.

One night, the Ruler of Wei was suddenly awakened by a chill blast that extinguished all the lights, but he saw the form of the late Empress Mao, with a score or two of other Palace attendants, coming toward the bed whereon he lay, and as they approached they demanded his life. He was very frightened and fell ill so that he was likely to die.

So the two officers Liu Fang and Sun Zu were set over the privy council, and he summoned his uncle Cao Yu, the Prince of Yan, to the capital to make him Regent Marshal to assist the Heir Apparent, Cao Fang. However, Cao Yu being modest and retiring by nature, declined these high offices and their responsibilities.

The Ruler of Wei then turned to his two confidants, Liu Fang and Sun Zu, inquired of them, saying, "Who of the family is a suitable person to support the Heir Apparent?"

As Liu Fang and Sun Zu had both received many favors from Cao Zhen, they replied, "None is so fit as Cao Shuang, the son of Cao Zhen."

The Ruler of Wei approved their choice, and thus Cao Shuang became a great person.

Then, Liu Fang and Sun Zu memorialized, saying, "As Cao Shuang has been chosen, Cao Yu, the Prince of Yan, should be ordered to leave the capital and return to Yan, his own place."

The Ruler of Wei consented and issued an edict, which these two bore to Cao Yu, saying, "The edict in the Emperor's own hand bids you return to your own domain at once, and you are not to return to court without a special command."

Cao Yu wept, but he left forthwith.

Thereupon, Cao Shuang was created Regent Marshal and Court Administrator.

But the Ruler of Wei's illness advanced rapidly, and he sent a messenger with the authority ensign to call Sima Yi into the Palace. As soon as he arrived, he was led to the Emperor's chamber.

"I feared lest I should not see you again," said the Ruler of Wei. "But now I can die content."

The general bowed and said, "On the road, they told me the Heavenly One was not perfectly well. I grieved that I had not wings to hasten hither. But I am happy in that I now behold the dragon countenance."

The heir, Cao Fang, was summoned to the Emperor's bedside and also Cao Shuang, Liu Fang, Sun Zu, and certain others.

Taking Sima Yi by the hand, the dying Emperor said, "When Liu Bei lay dying at Baidicheng, he confided his son, so soon to be an orphan, to the care of Zhuge Liang, who labored in this task to the very end and whose devotion only ceased with death. If such conduct is possible in the mere remnant of a dying dynasty continued in a small state, how much more may

I hope for it in a great country! My son is only eight years of age, and incapable of sustaining the burden of rulership. Happily for him, he has ample merit and experience around him in the persons of yourself and his relatives. He will never lack friends for my sake.”

Turning to the young prince, he continued, “My friend Sima Yi is as myself, and you are to treat him with the same respect and deference.”

Cao Rui bade Sima Yi lead the young prince forward. The boy threw his arms around Sima Yi’s neck and clung to him.

“Never forget the affection he has just shown,” said Cao Rui, weeping. And Sima Yi wept also.

The dying man swooned; although he could not speak, his hand still pointed to his son, and soon after he died. Cao Rui had reigned thirteen years and was thirty-six years of age. His death took place in the first month of the third year of Spectacular Beginning (AD 239).

No time was lost in enthroning the new Emperor, the supporters being Sima Yi and Cao Shuang. The new ruler’s name was Cao Fang. However, he was Cao Rui’s son only by adoption. He had been brought up in the Palace secretly, and no one knew his real origin.

The posthumous title of Emperor Rui the Knowledgeable was conferred upon the late ruler, and he was buried in the Gaoping Tombs. Empress Guo was given the title of Empress Dowager.

The new reign was styled Right Beginning Era, the first year (AD 239). Sima Yi and Cao Shuang conducted the government, and in all matters Cao Shuang treated Sima Yi with deference and took no steps without his knowledge.

Cao Shuang was no stranger at court. Cao Rui had respected him for his diligence and care and had been very fond of him. He had had the

freedom of the Palace all his life. He had a host of five hundred clients and retainers. Among them were five, wholly light and foppish. Their names were He Yan, Deng Yang, Li Sheng, Ding Mi, and Bi Gui. Deng Yang was a descendant of Commander Deng Yu of Han. Beside these five, there was another named Huan Fan, Minister of Agriculture, a man of good parts, who had the sobriquet of “Bag of Wisdom.” These six were Cao Shuang’s most trusted companions and confidants.

One day, He Yan said, “My lord, you should not let your great powers slip into the hands of any other, or you will repent it.”

Cao Shuang replied, “Sima Yi as well as I received the late Emperor’s sacred trust, and I mean to be true.”

He Yan said, “When your father and this Sima Yi were winning their victories in the west, your father suffered much from this man’s temper, which ultimately brought about his death. Why do you not look into that?”

Cao Shuang seemed suddenly to wake up.

Having entered into an intrigue with the majority of the officers about the court, he one day presented to the Ruler of Wei a memorial, saying, “Sima Yi should be promoted to the rank of Imperial Guardian for his great merits and services.”

The promotion was made, and consequently Sima Yi, now a civil officer, let the whole military authority fall into the hands of Cao Shuang.

Having thus far succeeded, Cao Shuang next appointed his brothers to high military posts: Cao Xi as Commander of the Center Army; Cao Xun, Commander of the Imperial Guards; Cao Yan, Commander of the Cavalry. Each commanded three thousands of the Palace guards, with the right to go in and out of the Palace at will. Moreover, three of his friends—He Yan, Deng Yang, and Ding Mi—were created Chairs of three boards; Bi Gui,

Commander of Capital District; and Li Sheng, Governor of Henan. These five and their patron were close associates in all concerns of state.

Cao Shuang gathered about him larger and still larger numbers of supporters, till Sima Yi gave out that he was ill and remained in seclusion. His two sons also resigned their offices.

Cao Shuang and his friends now gave themselves up to dissipation, spending days and nights in drinking and music. In their dress and the furniture of their table, they copied the Palace patterns. Tribute in the shape of jewels and curios went to the residence of Cao Shuang before it entered the Emperor's palace, and his complex swarmed with beautiful damsels. Minister Zhang Dang of the Inner Bureau toadied to Cao Shuang so far as to select eighteen of the late Emperor's handmaids and send them to the now-powerful minister. Cao Shuang also chose for him a chorus of two score well-born ladies who were skilled in music and dancing. Cao Shuang also built for himself beautiful towers and pavilions and made to himself vessels of gold and silver, the work of the most expert craftspeople, whom he kept constantly employed.

Now He Yan heard of Guan Lu's great skill in divination and sent to Pingyuan to invite him to discuss about the *Book of Changes*.

When the soothsayer arrived, Deng Yang was of the company to meet him, and he said to Guan Lu, "You call yourself a skillful diviner, but your speech does not resemble the language of the *Book of Changes*. How is that?"

Guan Lu replied, "An interpreter does not use the language of the original."

He Yan laughed, saying, "Certainly good words are not wearisome. But cast a lot for me, and tell me whether I shall ever arrive at the highest office or not, for I have dreamed repeatedly that many blue flies settled on my nose."

Guan Lu replied, "Gao Kai and Gao Yuan aided King Shun; Duke Zhou assisted the young Emperor Cheng of Zhou Dynasty; all these were kindly and modest and enjoyed great happiness. You, Sir, have come to high honors and wield great powers, but those who esteem you are few and those who fear you, many. You are not careful to walk in the way of good fortune.

"Now the nose is an eminence. If an eminence retains its characteristic, thereby it remains in honor. But is it not that blue flies gather to foul objects and the lofty fears a fall? I would wish you to give of your abundance for the good of the poor and avoid walking on the wrong road. Then, indeed, may you reach the highest dignity, and the blue flies will disperse."

"This is mere senile gossip," said Deng Yang.

"The gift of age is to see that which is yet to come; the gift of gossip is to perceive what is not said," replied Guan Lu. Thereupon, he shook out his sleeves and went away.

"He is very mad, really," said his two hosts.

Guan Lu went home. When he saw his uncle, Guan Lu gave him an account of the interview.

His uncle was alarmed at the probable consequences, and said, "Why did you anger them? They are too powerful for you to offend."

"What is there to fear? I have been talking to two dead men."

"What do you mean?"

“Deng Yang’s gait is that of one whose sinews are loosed from his bones, and his pulse is unsteady. When he would stand, he totters as a man without limbs. This is the aspect of a disembodied soul. He Yan looks as if his soul was about to quit its habitation. He is bloodless, and what should be solid in him is mere vapor. He looks like rotten wood. This is the aspect of a soul even now in the dark valley. Both these men will certainly soon die a violent death, and none need fear them.”

His uncle left, cursing him for a madman.

Cao Shuang and his five friends were devoted to hunting and were often out of the city. Cao Xi, a brother of Cao Shuang, remonstrated with him about this and pointed out the dangers of such frequent absence on these excursions.

“You are in an exalted position, and yet you are constantly being out hunting. If anyone took advantage of this to work you evil, you might have to be exceedingly regretful.”

Cao Shuang only showed anger and replied, “The whole military authority is in my hands, and what is there to fear?”

Huan Fan, Minister of Agriculture, also reasoned with him, but Cao Shuang would not listen.

About this time, the style of the reign was changed from Right Beginning, the tenth year, to Domestic Calm, the first year (AD 249).

Now ever since Cao Shuang had enjoyed the monopoly of military authority, he had never heard the truth about the state of health of the man he had maneuvered out of power. But when the Ruler of Wei appointed Li Sheng to the Imperial Protectorship of Jingzhou, Cao Shuang bade Li Sheng go to take leave of Sima Yi, at the same time to find out the true state of his health.

So Li Sheng proceeded to the residence of the High Minister and was announced.

Sima Yi saw through the device at once and told his sons, saying, "This is Cao Shuang's wish to find out my real condition." And he bade them play their parts in the scene he arranged, before the visitor was admitted.

Sima Yi threw aside his headdress, so letting his hair fall in disorder, stretched himself upon his couch, tumbled the bedding into confusion, got a couple of servant girls to support him, and then told his servants to lead in the visitor.

Li Sheng came in and went up to the sick man, saying, "It is a long time since I have seen you, and I did not know you were so seriously ill. His Majesty is sending me to Jingzhou, and I have come to pay my respects to you and bid you farewell."

"Ah, Bingzhou is in the north; you will have to be very careful there," said Sima Yi, feigning that he had not heard.

"I am going as Imperial Protector of Jingzhou, not Bingzhou," said Li Sheng.

"Oh, you have just come from Bingzhou."

"Jingzhou, in the Huashan Mountains."

"Just back from Jingzhou, eh?" said Sima Yi, smiling.

“How very ill the Imperial Guardian is!” said Li Sheng to the servants.

“The Minister is deaf,” said they.

“Give me paper and a pen,” said Li Sheng.

Writing materials were brought, when Li Sheng wrote what he wished to say and put it before his host.

“My illness has made me very deaf. Take care of yourself on the way,” said Sima Yi.

Looking up, he pointed to his mouth. One of the girls brought some broth and held the cup for him to drink. He put his lips to the cup, but spilled the broth all over his dress.

“I am very weak and ill,” said he, “and may die at any moment. My sons are but poor things, but you will instruct them. When you see the Regent Marshal, you will ask him to take care of them for me, will you not?”

At this point, Sima Yi fell back on the couch, panting, and Li Sheng took his leave.

Li Sheng told Cao Shuang what he had seen, and Cao Shuang rejoiced, thinking his rival could not last long.

“If the old man died, I should not be the one to grieve,” said Cao Shuang.

But no sooner had Li Sheng gone than Sima Yi rose from his couch and said to his sons, “Li Sheng will take a full account of this to Cao Shuang, who will not fear me anymore. But wait till Cao Shuang goes on his next hunting trip, and we will see what can be done.”

Soon after this, Cao Shuang proposed to the Ruler of Wei, Cao Fang, to visit the Gaoping Tombs, where his father lay, and perform the filial sacrifices in person. So they went, a goodly company of officers in the train

of the imperial chariot, and Cao Shuang with all his brothers and his friends went with the guards.

Huan Fan, Minister of Agriculture, entreated him to remain in the city for fear of plots and risings.

“Your Lordship is in charge of the capital security, and you and your brothers should not leave the city together. Suppose there were a revolt, what then?”

But Cao Shuang asked angrily and rudely, “Who would dare make trouble? Hold your wild tongue!”

And he went with the Emperor.

His departure rejoiced the heart of Sima Yi, who at once began quietly to muster his trusty friends and henchmen and put the finishing touches to the plot for the overthrow of his rival.

Now terminates his forced inaction,
He must destroy the hostile faction.

Cao Shuang’s fate will appear in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIV

CHAPTER 107

THE RULER OF WEI HANDS OVER THE POWER TO SIMA YI; JIANG WEI
IS DEFEATED AT OX HEAD MOUNTAIN.

Sima Yi was very pleased to hear that Cao Shuang and his party were to follow the Ruler of Wei on a visit to the tombs combined with a hunt, for it meant that the whole enemy faction left the city. Accordingly, Cao Shuang and his three brothers—Cao Xi, Cao Xun, and Cao Yan—and his friends He Yan, Deng Yang, Ding Mi, Bi Gui, Li Sheng, and others left the capital with the Emperor.

As soon as they left, Sima Yi entered with his authority as Imperial Guardian, gave Gao Rou, Minister of the Interior, provisional command of the army and sent him to seize the camp of Cao Shuang. A similar command was given to Wang Guan, Supervisor of the Palace, to replace Cao Xi as Commander of the Center Army and to occupy his camp.

Having secured his position thus, Sima Yi and his supporters went to the palace of the Empress Dowager.

They said to her, “Cao Shuang has betrayed the trust placed in him by the late Emperor and has ruined the government. His fault must be expiated.”

Empress Guo replied, “What can be done in the absence of the Son of Heaven?”

“I have prepared plans for the destruction of these base ministers and will see to it that no trouble happens to yourself.”

The Empress was much alarmed, but could only act as she was directed and agree. So two of Sima Yi's supporters, Commander Jiang Ji and High Minister Sima Fu, copied out the memorial he had prepared, and it was sent to the Ruler of Wei by the hand of an eunuch. Then the arsenals were seized.

Soon, the news of the rising came to the knowledge of the family of Cao Shuang, and his wife, Lady Liu, came out from the inner apartments and summoned Pan Ju, Commander of the Gates.

She inquired, "The Master is outside, and Sima Yi is revolting: what does it mean?"

"Your Ladyship need feel no alarm. Let me go and find out the truth," said Pan Ju.

Thereupon, Pan Ju, at the head of several dozen bowmen, went up on the wall and looked around. At that moment, Sima Yi was crossing the court, and Pan Ju bade his men shoot. Sima Yi could not pass.

But Sun Qiao, one of his generals, said, "You must not shoot at the Imperial Guardian; he is in public service."

Thrice, Sun Qiao urged his chief not to let the men shoot, and so Pan Ju desisted. Sima Yi went across guarded by his son Sima Zhao. Then he went out of the city and camped on River Luo at the Floating Bridge.

When the revolution began, one of Cao Shuang's officers, Lu Zhi by name, took counsel with Military Adviser Xin Chang.

“Now that this revolt has begun, what should we do?”

“Let us go to the Emperor with what troops we have,” replied Xin Chang.

“Perhaps the best course,” replied Lu Zhi.

And Xin Chang went into the inner chamber to get ready to start. There he met his sister, Xin Xianying, who asked the meaning of all this haste.

“His Majesty is out on a hunt, and Sima Yi has closed the gates of the city. This is rebellion.”

“I do not think so. He only means to slay Cao Shuang, his rival,” replied she.

“What will be the outcome of this?” asked her brother.

“Cao Shuang is no match for Sima Yi,” replied she.

“If Sima Yi asks us to join him, should we?” asked Xin Chang.

Xin Xianying replied, “You know what a true man should do. When a man is in danger, there is the greater need for sympathy. To be of Cao Shuang’s people and desert him in an emergency is the greatest of evils.”

This speech decided Xin Chang, who went with Lu Zhi. At the head of some twenty horsemen, they forced the gate and got out of the city.

When their escape was reported to Sima Yi, he thought that Huan Fan would surely try to follow their example, so he sent to call him. However, on the advice of his son, Huan Fan did not answer the summons, but decided to flee. He got into his carriage and drove hastily to the South Gate. But the gate was barred. The Commander of the Gate, Si Fan, was an old dependent of Huan Fan.

Huan Fan pulled out from his sleeve a slip of bamboo and said, “The Empress’s command: open the gate for me.”

“Let me look,” said Si Fan.

“What! How dare you, an old servant of mine, behave thus?”

Si Fan let Huan Fan pass.

As soon as he had got outside, Huan Fan shouted to Si Fan, “Sima Yi has raised a revolt, and you had better follow me!”

Si Fan realized that he had made a mistake and chased after Huan Fan, but failed to come up with him.

“So the ‘Bag of Wisdom’ has got away too. That is a pity, but what can we do?” said Sima Yi, when they reported the escape.

“The poor horse always hankers after the old stable and manger. Cao Shuang would not know how to use Huan Fan,” replied Jiang Ji.

Then Sima Yi called to him Xu Yun and Chen Tai and said, “Go you to Cao Shuang and say that I have no other intention than to take away the military power from him and his brothers.”

As soon as they had left, he called Yin Damu and ordered Jiang Ji prepare a letter to be taken to Cao Shuang by Yin Damu.

Said Sima Yi, “You are on good terms with the man and are the fittest person for this mission. Tell him that Jiang Ji and I are concerned solely with the military powers in the hands of himself and his brothers, as we have sworn pointing to River Luo.”

So Yin Damu went his way.

Out in the country, Cao Shuang was enjoying the hunting, flying his falcons and coursing his hounds. Suddenly came the news of the rising in the city and the memorial against him. He almost fell out of the saddle when they

told him. The eunuch handed in the memorial to the Ruler of Wei in the presence of Cao Shuang, who took it and opened it. A minister in attendance was ordered to read it. It said:

“Sima Yi, General Who Conquers the West and Imperial Guardian, with bowed head and trepidation, presents this memorial. On my return from the expedition into Liaodong, His late Majesty summoned Your Majesty, Cao Shuang, myself, and certain others to his bedside, took me by the arm, and impressed upon us all our duty in the years to be.

“Now Cao Shuang has betrayed the trust placed in him, has disordered the kingdom, usurped power at court, and seized upon power in the regions. He has appointed Zhang Dang, Administrator of the City, to control the court and spy upon Your Majesty. He is surely lying in wait to seize the empire. He has sown dissension in the royal family and injured his own flesh and blood. The whole land is in confusion, and people’s hearts are full of fear. All this is opposed to the injunctions of His Late Majesty and his commands to me.

“Stupid and worthless as I am, yet I dare not forget the words of His Late Majesty. My colleagues, Jiang Ji and Sima Fu, agree that Cao Shuang is disloyal at heart, and great military powers should not be entrusted to him or his brothers.

“I have petitioned Her Majesty and obtained her authority to act.

“All military powers have been wrested from the hands of Cao Shuang, Cao Xi, and Cao Xun, leaving them only the simple title of lordships, so that hereafter they may be unable to hinder or control

Your Majesty's actions. If there be any obstruction, the matter shall be summarily dealt with.

“Although in ill health, as a precautionary measure I have camped at the Floating Bridge, whence I write this.”

When they had made an end of reading, the Ruler of Wei turned to Cao Shuang and said, “In the face of such words, what mean you to do?”

Cao Shuang was at a loss and turned to his younger brother, saying, “What now?”

Cao Xi replied, “I remonstrated with you, but you were obstinate and listened not. So it has come to this. Sima Yi is false and cunning beyond measure. If Zhuge Liang could not get the better of him, could we hope to do so? I see nothing but to yield, that haply we may live.”

Just at this moment arrived Adviser Xin Chang and Commander Lu Zhi. Cao Shuang asked what tidings they brought.

They replied, “The city is completely and closely surrounded, Sima Yi is camped on the river at the Floating Bridge, and you cannot return. You must decide how to act at once.”

Then galloped up Huan Fan, who said, “This is really rebellion. Why not request His Majesty to proceed to Xuchang till regional troops can arrive and deal with Sima Yi?”

Cao Shuang replied, “How can we go to another place when all our families are in the city?”

Said Huan Fan, “Even a fool in this crisis would think only of life. You have the Son of Heaven with you here and command all the forces of the empire. None would dare disobey you, and yet you march quietly to death.”

Cao Shuang could not decide to strike a blow for safety; he did nothing but snivel.

Huan Fan continued, "We can reach Xuchang tonight. The stay in Xuchang would be but brief, and there are ample supplies for years. You have forces at your call at the South Pass. You hold the seal of Minister of War, and I have brought it with me. Everything is in your favor. Act! Act at once! Delay is death."

"Do not hurry me," said Cao Shuang. "Let me think it over carefully."

Then came Xu Yun and Chen Tai, the two messengers of Sima Yi, and said, "The Imperial Guardian desires only to strip the military power of the Regent Marshal. If the Regent Marshal yields, he may return peacefully to the city."

Still Cao Shuang hesitated.

Next arrived Yin Damu, saying, "The Imperial Guardian had sworn by River Luo to the singleness of his aim. Here is a letter of Minister Jiang Ji. The Regent Marshal should relinquish the military power and return to the Palace in peace."

When Cao Shuang seemed disposed to accept the assurance of Sima Yi, Huan Fan inveighed against it, saying, "You are a dead man if you listen to the voice of these people!"

Night found Cao Shuang still vacillating. As twilight faded into darkness he stood, sword in hand, sad, sighing and weeping. And morning found him still trying to make up his mind.

Huan Fan again urged him to decide upon some course.

"You have had a whole day and a whole night for reflection and must decide," said he.

“I will not fight; I will yield all. Being a wealthy man is enough,” said Cao Shuang, throwing down his sword.

Huan Fan left the tent wailing. “Cao Zhen might boast of his abilities, but his sons are mere cattle,” said he, weeping copiously.

The two messengers, Xu Yun and Chen Tai, bade Cao Shuang offer his seal of office to Sima Yi, and it was brought.

But First Secretary Yang Zong clung to it and would not give it up, saying, “Alas! that you, my lord, should resign your powers and make such a pitiful surrender. For surely you will not escape death in the eastern marketplace.”

“The Imperial Guardian will surely keep faith with me,” said Cao Shuang.

The seal was borne away, and Cao Shuang’s generals and soldiers, thus released from the bonds of discipline, dispersed, and the hosts melted away. When the Cao brothers reached the Floating Bridge, they were ordered to go to their dwellings, and they went. Their supporters were imprisoned to await the edicts of the Emperor.

Cao Shuang and his friends, so lately all-powerful, entered the city alone, without even a servant following.

As Huan Fan approached the bridge, Sima Yi, from horseback, pointed his whip disdainfully at him and said, “What brought you to this?”

Huan Fan made no reply, but with head bent, followed the others.

It was decided to request the Emperor to declare the hunt at an end and order a return to the city. Cao Shuang, Cao Xi, and Cao Xun were confined in their own house, the gate whereof was fastened with a huge lock, and soldiers were set to guard it round about. They were sad and anxious, not knowing what would be their fate.

Then Cao Xi said, "We have but little food left. Let us write and ask for supplies. If Sima Yi sends us food, we may be sure he does not intend harm."

They wrote, and a hundred carts of supplies were sent.

This cheered them, and Cao Shuang said, "Our lives are safe in the hands of Sima Yi!"

Sima Yi had Zhang Dang arrested and put to the question.

Zhang Dang said. "I am not the only one who has tried to subvert the government. He Yan, Deng Yang, Li Sheng, Ding Mi, and Bi Gui are all involved in the plot."

So they were arrested and, when interrogated, confessed that a revolt had been arranged for the third month. Sima Yi had them locked in one long wooden collar.

The Commander of the Gates, Si Fan, testified: "Huan Fan has imposed upon me with a pretended command from Her Majesty and so has escaped out of the city. Beside, he has said the Imperial Guardian was a rebel."

Then said Sima Yi, "When a person maligns another and is false, the punishment for such a crime as he imputes falls upon his own head."

Huan Fan and those with him were thrown into prison.

Presently, Cao Shuang and his brothers, all persons connected with them, and their clans were put to death in the marketplace. All the treasures of their houses were sent to the public treasury.

Now there was a certain woman of the Xiahou family who had been wife to Cao Wenshu, a second cousin of Cao Shuang. Early left a childless widow, her father wished her to marry again. Lady Xiahou refused and cut off her ears as a pledge of constancy. However, when the Caos were all put

to death, her father arranged another marriage for her; whereupon she cut off her nose. Her own people were chagrined at her obstinate determination.

“For whom are you keeping your vow?” said they. “Humanity is but as the light dust upon the tender grass, and what is the good of mutilating your body?”

The woman replied, weeping, “I have heard that honorable persons do not break a vow of chastity for the sake of wealth, and the hearts of righteous persons are constant unto death, regardless of all losses. While the house of Cao enjoyed prosperity, I remained faithful; how much more should I be true, now that it has fallen upon evil days? Can I act like a mere beast of the field?”

The story of her devotion came to the ears of Sima Yi, who praised her conduct and allowed her to adopt a son to rear as her own and so continue the family.



A poem says:

What is a man to be mindful of?
A grain of dust on a blade of grass;
Such virtue as Lady Xiahou had
Stands out sublime as the ages pass.
This fair, young wife of gentle mien
Dared all to maintain her purpose high.
What people though strong in the flush of life
Have equaled her in constancy?



After Cao Shuang had suffered death, Jiang Ji said to Sima Yi, “Xin Chang and Lu Zhi and others who had been of his party had forced the gate and joined the rebels. Yang Zong had opposed the surrender of the seal of the late minister. They deserve punishment.”

However, no action was taken against them.

“They are righteous people who served their master faithfully,” said Sima Yi, and he even confirmed these men in their offices.

Xin Chang sighed, “Had I not listened to the advice of my sister, I would have walked in the way of unrighteousness.”



A poet has praised his sister, Xin Xianying:

“You call him lord and take his pay,
Then stand by him when danger nears.”
Thus to her brother spoke Xin Xianying,
And won fair fame through endless years.



A general amnesty was extended to all Cao Shuang’s partisans, and no officer was removed or dismissed for having supported the late order of things. All were left in possession of their property, and soon all was tranquility.

However, it is to be noted that He Yan and Deng Yang met the unhappy end that Guan Lu had foretold for them.



The seer Guan Lu was deeply read
In all the lore of the ancient sages.
Thus he could see events to come
As clear as those of former ages.
And he perceived the soul of He Yan,
Already in the vale of gloom.
And knew the outer shell of Deng Yang
Was hastening to an early tomb.

After his recovery of power, Sima Yi was made Prime Minister and received the Nine Dignities. Sima Yi refused these honors, but the Ruler of Wei insisted and would take no denial. His two sons were made assistants to their father, and all state affairs fell under the control of these three.

However, Sima Yi remembered that one man, Xiahou Ba, a member of the Cao clan, still commanded at Yongzhou. In his position, Xiahou Ba might be a real danger, and he must be removed. So an edict was issued calling him to Capital Luoyang to discuss affairs.

Upon receiving this call, Xiahou Ba was shocked. But instead of obeying this call, he declared himself a rebel, and he had a force of three thousand troops to support him. As soon as this was known, Guo Huai marched to suppress the malcontent. The two armies were soon face to face, and Guo Huai went to the front and began to revile his opponent.

“How could you rebel against the ruling house, you who are of the same clan as our great founder, and you who have always been treated generously?”

Xiahou Ba replied, “My forefathers served the state right well, but who is this Sima Yi that he has put to death my kinspeople and would now destroy me? What is his aim, if it be not to usurp the Throne? If I can cut him off and so frustrate his design, I shall at least be no traitor to the state.”

Guo Huai rode forward to attack, and Xiahou Ba advanced to the encounter. They fought some ten bouts, and then Guo Huai turned and fled. But this was only a feint to lead on his enemy, for ere Xiahou Ba had gone far, he heard a shout behind him and turned to see Chen Tai about to attack. At the same moment, Guo Huai turned again, and thus Xiahou Ba was between two fires. He could effect nothing, so he fled, losing many troops. Soon he decided that his only course was to flee to Hanzhong and to surrender to the Ruler of Shu.

Wherefore, he went into Hanzhong to see if haply the Latter Ruler would accept his services. When Jiang Wei heard of his desire to surrender, he had doubts of Xiahou Ba’s sincerity. However, after due inquiry, Jiang Wei was satisfied and allowed the renegade from Wei to enter the city. After making his obeisance, Xiahou Ba, with many tears, told the story of his wrongs. Jiang Wei expressed sympathy.

Said Jiang Wei, “In the ancient time, Wei Zi left the court of King Zhou in disgust, and this act has assured to him everlasting honor. You may be able now to assist in the restoration of the House of Han, and you will then stand no whit inferior to any person of antiquity.”

A banquet was ordered, and while it was being prepared, the host talked of affairs in Capital Luoyang.

Said Jiang Wei, “The Simas are now most powerful and in a position to carry out any scheme they planned. Think you that they have any intentions against Shu?”

“The old traitor has enough to do with his rebellion; he has no leisure to trouble about any outside matters. However, two other young leaders in Wei have lately come to the front, and if Sima Yi sent them against Shu and Wu, it might go ill with you both.”

“And who are these two?”

“One is named Zhong Hui, a man of Changsha. He is a son of the former Imperial Guardian Zhong Yao. As a mere boy he was noted for being bold and smart. His father used to take him and his brother, Zhong Yu, to court. Zhong Hui was seven, and his brother a year older. Emperor Pi noticed one day that the elder boy was sweating and asked him the reason. Zhong Yu replied, ‘Whenever I am frightened, the sweat pours out.’ Then Emperor Pi said to the other boy, ‘You do not seem frightened.’ And Zhong Hui replied, ‘I am so frightened that the sweat cannot come out.’ The Emperor discerned the extraordinary ability of the boy. A little later, Zhong Hui was always studying books on war and tactics and became an able strategist, so that he won admiration from both Sima Yi and Jiang Ji. Zhong Hui is now a secretary in the Palace.

“The second man is Deng Ai from Yiyang. He was left an orphan very early, but he was ambitious and enterprising. If he saw lofty mountains or wide marshes, he always looked for those points where soldiers might be stationed or depots of provisions made or combustibles laid. People ridiculed him, but Sima Yi saw there was much to admire and employed the young man on his staff. Deng Ai had an impediment in his speech, so that he called himself ‘Deng-eng-eng-Ai’, and Sima Yi used to make fun of him and asked him one day how many there were of him since he called himself ‘Deng-eng-eng-Ai.’ Deng Ai at once replied, ‘There is only one phoenix when they say, ‘O Phoenix! O Phoenix!’ This ready repartee shows the

quickness of his intellect, and you may well be on your guard against him and the other, for they are to be feared.”

“I do not think them worth even talking about,” replied Jiang Wei.

Jiang Wei took Xiahou Ba to Chengdu and presented him to the Latter Ruler.

Jiang Wei said, “Sima Yi had slain Cao Shuang, and he wanted to bait Xiahou Ba, who yielded to Shu. Now the Simas, father and sons, are holding the supreme power, the young Ruler Cao Fang is a weakling, and Wei’s fortune is near its end. For many years in Hanzhong, our troops have been well trained, and our stores and depots filled with ample supplies. Now I wish to lead an expedition, using Xiahou Ba as guide, to conquer the Middle Land and to reestablish the House of Han in its old capital. This is how I could show my gratitude to Your Majesty and fulfill the desire of the late Prime Minister.”

But Fei Yi, Chair of the Secretariat, opposed any expedition, saying, “We have lately lost by death two trusty ministers, Jiang Wan and Dong Yun, and there is no one left fit to take care of the government. The attempt should be postponed; no hasty move should be made.”

“Not so,” replied Jiang Wei. “Life is short. Our days flash by as the glint of a white horse across a chink in the door. We are waiting and waiting. Are we never to try to restore Han to its old glory?”

“Remember the saying of the wise Sun Zi: ‘Know thyself and know thine enemy, then is victory sure.’ We are not the equals of the late Prime Minister, and where he failed, are we likely to succeed?”

Jiang Wei said, “I would enlist the aid of the Qiangs. I have lived near them in Longshang and know them well. With their help, even if we do not

gain the whole empire, we can at least conquer and hold all west of Changan.”

The Latter Ruler here closed the discussion, saying, “Sir, as you desire to conquer Wei, do your best. I will not damp your enthusiasm.”

Thus the Latter Ruler’s consent was given. Then Jiang Wei left the court and betook himself, with Xiahou Ba, into Hanzhong to prepare for a new expedition.

“We will first send an envoy to the Qiangs to make a league with them,” said Jiang Wei. “Then we will march out by the Xiping Pass to Yongzhou, where we will build up two ramparts in the Qushan Mountains and garrison them. The position is a point of vantage. Then we will send supplies beyond the pass by land and waterways, and advance gradually, according to the plan devised by the late Prime Minister.”

In the autumn of the year (AD 249) they sent the two Shu generals, Li Xin and Ju An, with fifteen thousand troops, to construct the two ramparts in Qushan, of which Ju An was to hold the eastern and Li Xin the western.

When the news reached Yongzhou, the Imperial Protector, Guo Huai, sent a report to Luoyang and also dispatched Chen Tai with a force of fifty thousand troops to oppose the troops of Shu. When that army arrived, Li Xin and Ju An led their troops to meet it. But their armies were too weak to stand such a large force, and they once more retired into the city. Chen Tai ordered his army to lay siege and occupy the road that led to Hanzhong, so that supplies were cut off.

After some days, and when the soldiers of Shu began to feel the pinch of hunger, Guo Huai came to see what progress his general was making.

At sight of the position, he rejoiced exceedingly, and when he returned to camp, he said to Chen Tai, "In this high country the city must be short of water, which means that the besieged must come out for supplies. Let us cut off the streams that supply them, and they will perish of thirst."

So the Wei soldiers were set to work to divert the streams above the city, and the besieged were soon distressed. Li Xin led out a strong force to try to seize the water sources and fought stubbornly, but was at length worsted and driven back within the walls. After that, Li Xin and Ju An joined their forces and made another attempt to go out and fight. But the Yongzhou troops surrounded them, and a melee ensued until Li Xin and Ju An fought their way back to the city.

Meanwhile, the soldiers were parched with thirst.

Ju An discussed the circumstance with Li Xin, saying, "I do not understand the delay of Commander Jiang Wei's reinforcements."

Li Xin said, "Let me try to fight my way out and get help."

So the gates were opened, and Li Xin rode out with some twenty horsemen. These were opposed and had to fight every inch of the way, but eventually Li Xin won, though severely wounded. All his followers had fallen.

That night, a strong north wind brought a heavy fall of snow, and the besieged were thus temporarily relieved from the water famine. They melted the snow and prepared food.

Li Xin, severely wounded, made his way west along the hill paths. After two days he fell in with Jiang Wei.

He dismounted, prostrated himself, and told his story: "Qushan had been surrounded and cut off from water supplies. By luck, it snowed and our soldiers were partly relieved. But the situation was very urgent."

“The delay is not due to my slackness. The Qiang allies we depended upon have not come,” said Jiang Wei.

Jiang Wei sent an escort with the wounded Li Xin to conduct him to Chengdu, where his wounds could be treated.

Turning to Xiahou Ba, Jiang Wei asked, “The Qiangs do not come, and the Wei army is besieging Qushan. General, do you have any plan to propose?”

Xiahou Ba replied, “If we wait for the coming of the Qiangs, it looks as if we shall be too late to relieve Qushan. It is very probable that Yongzhou has been left undefended; wherefore I propose that you go toward Ox Head Mountain and work round to the rear of Yongzhou, which will cause the Wei army to fall back to relieve Yongzhou and so relieve our force.”

“The plan appears excellent,” replied Jiang Wei. And he set out.

When Chen Tai knew that Li Xin had escaped, he said to his chief, “Now that this man has got out, he will tell Jiang Wei of the danger, and Jiang Wei will conclude that our efforts are concentrated on the ramparts and will endeavor to attack our rear. Therefore, I suggest, General, that you go to River Tao and stop the supplies of our enemies, while I go to the Ox Head Mountain and smite them. They will retreat as soon as they know their supplies are threatened.”

So Guo Huai marched secretly to River Tao, while Chen Tai went to the hills.

When the Shu army led by Jiang Wei came near Ox Head Mountain, they heard a great shouting in front, and the scouts came in to report that the road was barred. Jiang Wei himself rode out to look.

“So you intended to attack Yongzhou, did you?” shouted Chen Tai. “But we know it and have been watching for you a long time.”

Jiang Wei rode forth to attack. Chen Tai advanced with a flourish of his sword, and they engaged. Chen Tai soon ran away. Then the soldiers of Shu came forward and fell on, driving the soldiers of Wei back to the summit of the hills. But they halted there, and Jiang Wei encamped at the foot of the hills, whence he challenged the enemy every day. But he could gain no victory.

Seeing no result after some days of this, Xiahou Ba said, “This is no place to remain in. We can get no victory and are tempting fate by remaining open to a surprise. I think we should retire till some better plan can be tried.”

Just then it was reported: “The supply road by River Tao has fallen into the hands of Guo Huai!”

Shocked with the news, Jiang Wei bade Xiahou Ba march away first, and he covered the retreat. Chen Tai pursued in five divisions along five different roads, but Jiang Wei got possession of the meeting point and held them all in check, finally forcing them back on the hills. But from this position, Chen Tai ordered his troops to shoot heavy discharges of arrows and stones so that Jiang Wei was forced to abandon his position. He went to River Tao, where Guo Huai led his force out to attack. Jiang Wei went to and fro, smiting where he could, but he was surrounded and only got out by a desperate effort and after losing more than half of his force.

Jiang Wei hastened toward Yangping Pass, but fell in with another body of the enemy, at the head of which he saw a fierce, youthful leader,

who at once rode out furiously to attack. This leader had a round face, long ears, and a square mouth with thick lips. Below his left eye was a large hairy mole. It was the elder son of Sima Yi. He was General of the Flying Cavalry, Sima Shi.

“Simpleton! How dare you stand in my way?” yelled Jiang Wei, as he rode forward with his spear set.

Sima Shi met the attack, and a few bouts were fought before Sima Shi fled. Jiang Wei came off victor and so was free to continue his way. Presently he reached the pass and was welcomed within its sheltering walls. Sima Shi soon followed and attacked the Pass after his arrival, but those within the ramparts replied with the multiple crossbows which threw ten bolts at each discharge...for the army of Shu had made these engines of war after the design left by Zhuge Liang.

Owing to superior weapons, Shu defeated Wei,
Wei would never recover what was lost that day.

What befell Sima Shi will be told in the next chapter.



END OF ACT XXIII

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXV

CHAPTER 108

IN THE SNOW, DING FENG WINS A VICTORY; AT A BANQUET, SUN JUN
EXECUTES A SECRET PLAN.

As has been said, Jiang Wei, in his retreat, fell in with a force under Sima Shi, barring his road. It came about thus. After Jiang Wei invaded Yongzhou, Guo Huai had sent a hurried messenger to the capital, and the Ruler of Wei summoned Sima Yi for advice. It had then been decided to send reinforcements to Yongzhou, and fifty thousand troops had marched, led by the son of the Prime Minister. On the march, Sima Shi had heard that the Shu army had been beaten back, and he had concluded they were weak. So he decided to meet them on the road and give battle. Near the Yangping Pass, however, the roads had been lined with troops armed with the repeating crossbows designed by Zhuge Liang. Since Zhuge Liang's death, large numbers of these weapons had been made, and the bolts from them, which went in flights of ten, were poisoned. Consequently, the Wei losses were very heavy, and Sima Shi himself barely escaped with life. However, eventually he returned to Luoyang.

From the walls of Qushan, the Shu general, Ju An, watched anxiously for the expected help. As it came not, he ultimately surrendered. And Jiang Wei, with a loss of twenty to thirty thousand soldiers, marched back into Hanzhong.

In the third year of Domestic Calm (AD 251), in the eighth month, Sima Yi fell ill. His sickness increased rapidly, and, feeling that his end was near, he called his two sons to his bedside to hear his last words.

“I have served Wei many years and reached the highest rank possible among ministers. People have suspected me of ulterior aims, and I have always felt afraid of that. After my death, the government will be in your hands, and you must be doubly careful.”

Sima Yi passed away even as he said these last words. The sons informed the Ruler of Wei, who conferred high honors upon the dead and advanced his sons, Sima Shi to the rank of Regent Marshal with the leadership of the Chairs of the Boards, and Sima Zhao to the rank of Commander of the Flying Cavalry.

Meanwhile in the South Land, the Ruler of Wu, Sun Quan, had named his son Sun Deng as his heir. His mother was Lady Xu. But Sun Deng died in the fourth year of the Red Crow Era (AD 241). So the second son, Sun He, was chosen his successor. His mother was Lady Wang. A quarrel arose between Sun He and Princess Quan, who maligned him and intrigued against him, so that he was set aside. Sun He died of mortification. Then the third son, Sun Liang, was named the Heir Apparent. His mother was Lady Pan.

At this time old officials like Lu Xun and Zhuge Jin were dead, and the business of the government, great and small, was in the hands of Zhuge Ke, son of Zhuge Jin.

In the first year of the Grand Beginning Era (AD 251), on the first of the eighth month, a great storm passed over Wu. The waves rose to a great

height, and the water stood eight feet deep over the low-lying lands. The pines and cypresses, which grew at the cemetery of the Imperial Ancestors of Wu, were uprooted and carried to the South Gate of Jianye, where they stuck, roots upward, in the road.

Sun Quan was frightened and fell ill. In the early days of the next year his illness became serious, whereupon he called in Imperial Guardian Zhuge Ke and Regent Marshal Lu Dai to hear the declaration of his last wishes. Soon after, he died, at the age of seventy-one. He had reigned for twenty-four years. In the Shu-Han calendar, it was the fifteenth year of Long Enjoyment (AD 252).



A hero, green-eyed and purple-bearded,
He called forth devotion from all.
He lorded the east without challenge
Till death's one imperative call.

Zhugé Ke immediately placed his late lord's son Sun Liang on the throne, and the opening of the new reign was marked by the adoption of the style Great Prosperity Era, the first year (AD 252). A general amnesty was proclaimed. The late ruler received the posthumous style of Sun Quan the Great Emperor and was buried in Jiangling.

When these things were reported in the Wei capital, Sima Shi's first thought was to attack the South Land.

But his plans were opposed by Chair of the Secretariat Fu Gu, saying, "Remember what a strong defense to Wu is the Great River. The country

has been many times attacked by our ancestors, but never conquered. Rather, let us all hold what we have till the time be expedient to possess the whole empire.”

Sima Shi replied, “The way of Heaven changes thrice in a century, and no three-part division is permanent. I wish to attack Wu.”

Sima Zhao, his brother, was in favor of attack, saying “The occasion is most opportune. Sun Quan is newly dead, and the present ruler is a child.”

An expedition was decided upon. Wang Chang, General Who Conquers the South, was sent with one hundred thousand troops against Nanjun. Guanqiu Jian, General Who Guards the South, was given one hundred thousand troops to go against Wuchang. Hu Zun, General Who Conquers the East, led one hundred thousand troops against Dongxing. They marched in three divisions. Sima Zhao was made Commander-in-Chief of the campaign.

In the winter of that year, the tenth month, Sima Zhao marched the armies near to the Wu frontiers and camped. Sima Zhao called together Wang Chang, Guanqiu Jian, Hu Zun, and various other commanders to decide upon plans.

He said, “The county of Dongxing is most important to Wu. They have built a great rampart, with walls right and left to defend Lake Chaohu from an attack in the rear. You gentlemen will have to exercise extreme care.”

Then he bade Wang Chang and Guanqiu Jian each to take ten thousand troops and place themselves right and left, but not to advance till Dongxing had been captured. When that city had fallen, these two were to go forward at the same time. Hu Zun was to lead the van. The first step was to

construct a floating bridge to storm the rampart. The two walls should then be captured.

News of the danger soon came to Wu, and Zhuge Ke called a council to take measures.

Then said Ding Feng, General Who Pacifies the North, “Dongxing is of the utmost importance, as its loss would endanger Wuchang.”

“I agree with you,” said Zhuge Ke. “You say just what I think. You should lead three thousand marines up the river in thirty ships, while on land, Lu Ju, Tang Zi, and Liu Zang will follow in three directions with ten thousand troops each. The signal for the general attack will be a cluster of bombs.”

Ding Feng received the command, and, with three thousand marines and thirty battleships, he sailed on the Great River to Dongxing.

Hu Zun, the Van Leader of Wei, crossed on the floating bridge and took and camped on the rampart. He then sent Huan Jia and Han Zong to assault the left and right flanking forts, which were held by the Wu generals Quan Yi and Liu Lue. These forts had high walls and strong, and made a good resistance, so that the Wei force could not overcome. But Quan Yi and Liu Lue dared not venture out to attack so strong a force as was attacking them.

Hu Zun made a camp at Xutang. It was then the depth of winter and intensely cold. Heavy snow fell. Thinking that no warlike operations were possible in such weather, Hu Zun and his officers made a great feast.

In the midst of the feasting came one to report, “Thirty ships are coming in the river.”

Hu Zun went out to look and saw them come into the bank. He made out a hundred troops on each.

As they were so few, he returned to the feast and told his officers, “Only three thousand sailors. There is nothing to be alarmed at.”

Giving orders to keep a careful watch, they all returned to enjoy themselves.

Ding Feng’s ships were all drawn up in line. Then he said to his officers, “Today, there is indeed a grand opportunity for a brave soldier to distinguish himself. We shall need the utmost freedom of movement, so throw off your armor, leave your helmets, cast aside your long spears, and reject your heavy halberds. Short swords are the weapons for today.”

From the shore, the soldiers of Wei watched the Wu marines with amusement, taking no trouble to prepare against an attack. But suddenly, a cluster of bombs exploded, and simultaneously with the roar, Ding Feng sprang ashore at the head of his troops. They dashed up the bank and made straight for the Wei camp.

The soldiers of Wei were taken completely by surprise and were helpless. Han Zong grasped one of the halberds that stood by the door of the commander’s tent, but Ding Feng stabbed him in the breast, and he rolled over. Huan Jia went round and came up on the left. Just as he poised his spear to thrust, Ding Feng gripped it under his arm. Huan Jia let go and turned to flee, but Ding Feng sent his sword flying after him and caught him in the shoulder. He turned and was thrust through by Ding Feng’s spear.

The three companies of Wu marines went to and fro in the camp of Wei, slaying as they would. Hu Zun mounted a horse and fled. His troops

ran away across the floating bridge, but that gave way and many were thrown into the water and drowned. Dead bodies lay about on the snow in large numbers. The spoil of military gear that fell to Wu was immense.

Sima Zhao, Wang Chang, and Guanqiu Jian, seeing the Dongxing front had been broken, decided to retreat.

Zhuge Ke marched his army to Dongxing, and he made great feasting and distribution of rewards in celebration of victory.

Then, he said to his leaders, "Sima Zhao has suffered a defeat and retreated to the north. It is time to take the Middle Land!"

So he told his officers that this was his intention, and also sent away letters to Shu to engage the aid of Jiang Wei, promising that the empire should be divided between them when they had taken it.

An army of two hundred thousand troops was told off to invade the Middle Land. Just as it was starting, a stream of white vapor was seen emerging from the earth, and as it spread, it gradually enveloped the whole army so that people could not see each other.

"It is a white rainbow," said Jiang Yan, "and it bodes ill to the army. I advise you, O Imperial Guardian, to return and not march against Wei."

"How dare you utter such ill-omened words and blunt the keenness of my army?" cried Zhuge Ke, angrily.

He bade the lictors take Jiang Yan out and put him to death. But Jiang Yan's colleagues interceded for him, and he was spared, but he was stripped of all rank. Orders were issued to march quickly.

Then Ding Feng offered a suggestion, saying, "Wei depends on Xincheng for the defense of its passes. It would be a severe blow to Sima Shi if Xincheng falls."

Zhuge Ke welcomed this suggestion and gave orders to march on Xincheng. They came up and found the city gates closed, wherefore they began to besiege the city. The Commander in the city, Zhang Te, saw the legions of Wu at the walls, held a strict defense.

A hasty messenger was sent to Luoyang, and Secretary Yu Song told the Prime Minister, Sima Shi.

Yu Song said, “Zhuge Ke is laying siege to Xincheng. The city should not try to repulse the attack, but simply hold out as long as possible. When the besiegers have exhausted their provisions, they will be compelled to retire. As they retreat, we can smite them. However, it is necessary to provide against any invasion from Shu.”

Accordingly, Sima Zhao was sent to reinforce Guo Huai so as to keep off Jiang Wei, while Guanqiu Jian and Hu Zun kept the army of Wu at bay.

For months, the army of Zhuge Ke battered at Xincheng without success. He urged his generals to strenuous efforts, threatening to put to death anyone who was dilatory. At last, his attacks looked like they were succeeding, for the northeast corner of the wall seemed shaken.

Then Zhang Te, the Commander of Xincheng, thought of a device. He sent a persuasive messenger with all the register documents to Zhuge Ke.

And the messenger said, “It is a rule in Wei that if a city holds out against attack for a hundred days and reinforcement has not arrived, then its commander may surrender without penalty to his family. Now, Xincheng has held out for over ninety days, and my master hopes you will allow him to withstand the few days necessary to complete the hundred, when he will yield. Here are all register documents that he desires to tender first.”

Zhuge Ke had no doubts that the story was genuine. He ordered the army to retreat temporarily, and the defenders enjoyed a rest. But all Zhang Te really desired was time wherein to strengthen the weak angle of the wall. As soon as the attacks ceased, the defenders pulled down the houses near the corner and repaired the wall with the material.

As soon as the repairs were complete, Zhang Te threw off all pretense and cried from the wall, "I have half a year's provisions yet and will not surrender to any curs of Wu!"

The defense became as vigorous as before the truce. Zhuge Ke was enraged at being so tricked, and urged on the attack. But one day, one of the thousands of arrows that flew from the rampart struck him in the forehead, and he fell. He was borne to his tent, but the wound inflamed, and he became very ill.

Their leader's illness disheartened the troops, and, moreover, the weather became very hot. Sickness invaded the camp, so that soldiers and leaders alike wished to go home.

When Zhuge Ke had recovered sufficiently to resume command, he urged on the attack, but the generals said, "The soldiers are sick and unfit for battle."

Zhuge Ke burst into fierce anger, and said, "The next person who mentions illness will be beheaded."

When the report of this threat got abroad, the soldiers began to desert freely. Presently, Commander Cai Lin, with his whole company, went over to the enemy. Zhuge Ke began to be alarmed and rode through the camps to see for himself. Surely enough, the soldiers all looked sickly, with pale and puffy faces.

The siege had to be raised, and Zhuge Ke retired into his own country. But scouts brought the news of retreat to Guanqiu Jian, who led the Wei's grand army to follow and harass Zhuge Ke's march and inflicted a severe defeat.

Mortified by the course of events, after his return Zhuge Ke did not attend court held by the Ruler of Wu, but pretended illness.

Sun Liang, the Ruler of Wu, went to the residence to see his general, and the officers came to call. In order to silence comment, Zhuge Ke assumed an attitude of extreme severity, investigating everyone's conduct very minutely, punishing rigorously any fault or shortcoming and meting out sentences of banishment, or death with exposure, till everyone walked in terror. He also placed two of his own clique, Zhang Yue and Zhu En, over the royal guards, making them the teeth and claws of his vengeance.

Now Sun Jun was a son of Sun Gong and a great-grandson of Sun Jing, brother of Sun Jian. Sun Quan loved him and had put him in command of the guards. Sun Jun was enraged at being superseded by Zhang Yue and Zhu En, the two creatures of Zhuge Ke.

Minister Teng Yin, who had an old quarrel with Zhuge Ke, said to Sun Jun, "This Zhuge Ke is as cruel as he is powerful. He abuses his authority, and no one is safe against him. I also think he is aiming at something yet higher and you, Sir, as one of the ruling family, ought to put a stop to it."

"I agree with you, and I want to get rid of him," replied Sun Jun. "Now I will obtain an edict condemning him to death."

Both went in to see the Ruler of Wu, Sun Liang, and they laid the matter before him.

“I am afraid of him, too,” replied Sun Liang. “I have wanted to remove him for some time but have found no opportunity. If you would prove your loyalty, you would do it for me.”

Then said Teng Yin, “Your Majesty can give a banquet and invite him, and let a few braves be ready, hidden behind the curtains. At a signal, as the dropping of a wine cup, they might jump out and slay him, and all further trouble would be avoided.”

Sun Liang agreed.

Zhuge Ke had never been to court since his return from the unfortunate expedition. Under a plea of indisposition, he had remained moping at home. One day, he was going out of his reception room when he suddenly saw, coming in, a person dressed in the mourning white.

“Who are you?” said he, rather roughly.

The person seemed too terror-stricken to reply or resist when he was seized.

They questioned him, and he said, “I was in mourning for my father, newly dead, and had come into the city to seek a priest to read the liturgy. I had entered by mistake, thinking it was a temple.”

The gate wardens were questioned. They said, “There are scores of us at the gate, which is never unwatched. We have not seen a man enter.”

Zhuge Ke raged and had the mourner and the gate wardens put to death. But that night, he was restless and sleepless. By and by, he heard a rending sound that seemed to come from the reception hall, so he arose and went to see what it was. The great main beam had broken in two.

Zhuge Ke, much disturbed, returned to his chamber to try once more to sleep. But a cold wind blew, and, shivering in the chilly air, he saw the figures of the mourner and the gate wardens he had put to death. They advanced toward him holding their heads in their hands and seemed to threaten him. He was frightened, and fell in a swoon.

Next morning, when washing his face, the water seemed tainted with the smell of blood. He bade the maid throw it away and bring more; it made no difference, the odor was still there. He was perplexed and distressed.

Then came a messenger with an invitation to a royal banquet. He had his carriage prepared. As he was passing through the gate, a yellow dog jumped up and caught hold of his garment and then howled lugubriously.

“The dog even mocks me!” said he, annoyed, and he bade his attendants take it away.

Then he set out for the Palace. Before he had gone far, he saw a white rainbow rise out of the earth and reach up to the sky. While he was wondering what this might portend, his friend Zhang Yue came up and spoke a word of warning.

“I feel doubtful about the real purpose of this banquet,” said Zhang Yue, “and advise you not to go.”

Zhuge Ke gave orders to drive home again. But before he had reached his own gate, the two conspirators—Sun Jun and Teng Yin—rode up and asked, “O Imperial Guardian, why are you turning back?”

“I feel unwell and cannot see the Emperor today,” replied Zhuge Ke.

They replied, “This court is appointed to be held especially to do honor to you and the army. You have not yet reported, and there is a banquet for you. You may be ill, but you really must go to court.”

Zhuge Ke yielded, and once more set his face toward the Palace. Sun Jun and Teng Yin went with him, and his friend Zhang Yue followed. The banquet was spread when he arrived, and after he had made his obeisance, he went to his place.

When the wine was brought in, Zhuge Ke, thinking it might be poisoned, excused himself from drinking, saying, "I am currently ill, and I cannot drink wine."

"Will you have some of the medicated wine brought from your own residence?" said Sun Jun.

"Yes, I could drink that," replied he.

So a servant was sent for a supply that he might drink with the other guests.

After several courses, the Ruler of Wu made an excuse and left the banquet hall. Sun Jun went to the foot of the hall and changed his garments of ceremony for more homely garb, but underneath these he put on armor.

Then suddenly he raised his keen sword and ran up the hall, shouting, "The Emperor has issued an edict to slay a rebel!"

Zhuge Ke, startled so that he dropped his cup, laid his hand upon his sword. But he was too late; his head rolled to the floor. His friend Zhang Yue drew his sword and rushed at the assassin, but Sun Jun evaded the full force of the blow and was only wounded in the left finger. Sun Jun slashed back at Zhang Yue and wounded him in the right arm. Then the braves dashed in and finished Zhang Yue.

The braves were then sent to arrest Zhuge Ke's family, while the bodies of Zhuge Ke and Zhang Yue were hastily rolled in matting, thrown into a cart, taken to the outside of the south gate, and tossed into a rubbish pit.

While Zhuge Ke was absent in the palace, his wife sat in the women's quarters at home feeling strangely unquiet.

Presently, a maid came in and, when she drew near, his wife said, "Why does your clothing smell of blood?"

To her horror, the maid suddenly transformed into a weird creature with rolling eyes and gritting teeth, that went dancing about the room and leaping till it touched the roof-beams, shrieking all the time, "I am Zhuge Ke, and I have been slain by that bastard Sun Jun!"

By this time, the whole family were frightened and began wailing. And a few minutes later, the residence was surrounded by a crowd of armed guards sent to murder the inmates, whom they bound, carried off to the marketplace, and put to the sword. These things occurred in the tenth month of the second year of Great Prosperity (AD 253).

When Zhuge Jin lived, he saw his son's ability display prominently, and he often sighed, saying, "This son will not safeguard the family."

Others had also predicted an early death. Zhang Qi, High Minister in Wei, used to say to Sima Shi, "Zhuge Ke will die soon."

And when asked why, Zhang Qi replied, "Can a person live long when his dignity endangers that of his lord?"

After the conspiracy, Sun Jun became Prime Minister in place of his victim. He was also placed in command of all the military forces, and became very powerful. The control of all matters was in his hands.

In Chengdu, when the letter of Zhuge Ke asking help from Jiang Wei arrived, Jiang Wei had audience with the Latter Ruler and requested authority to raise an army against the north.

The army fought, but fought in vain,
Success may crown a new campaign.

Who were victorious will appear in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXIV

CHAPTER 109

A RUSE OF A HAN GENERAL: SIMA ZHAO IS SURROUNDED;
RETRIBUTION FOR THE HOUSE OF WEI: CAO FANG IS DETHRONED.

It was the autumn of the sixteenth year of Long Enjoyment (AD 253), and Jiang Wei's army of two hundred thousand was ready to march against the north. Liao Hua and Zhang Yi were Leaders of the Van; Xiahou Ba was Army Strategist; Zhang Ni was in command of the commissariat. The army marched out by the Yangping Pass.

Discussing the plan of campaign with Xiahou Ba, Jiang Wei said, "Our former attack on Yongzhou failed, so this time they will doubtless be even better prepared to resist. What do you suggest?"

Xiahou Ba replied, "Nanan is the only well-provided place in all Longshang. If we take that, it will serve as an excellent base. Our former ill-success was due to the non-arrival of the Qiangs. Let us therefore send early to tell them to assemble at Longyou, after which we will move out at Shiyang and march to Nanan by way of Dongting."

"You spoke well," said Jiang Wei.

He at once sent Xi Zheng as his envoy, bearing gifts of gold and pearls and silk to win the help of the King of the Qiangs, whose name was Mi Dang. The mission was successful: King Mi Dang accepted the presents and sent fifty thousand troops to Nanan under the Qiang General Ehe Shaoge.

When Guo Huai heard of the threatened attack, he sent a hasty memorial to Capital Luoyang.

Sima Shi at once asked his leaders, "Who will go out to meet the army from the west?"

Xu Zhi volunteered, and as Sima Shi had a high opinion of his capacity, he appointed Xu Zhi as Leader of the Van. The brother of the Prime Minister, Sima Zhao, went as Commander-in-Chief.

The Wei army set out for the West Valley Land, reached Dongting, and there fell in with Jiang Wei. When both sides were arrayed, Xu Zhi, who wielded a mighty splitter-of-mountains ax as his weapon, rode out and challenged. Liao Hua went forth to accept, but after a few bouts, he took advantage of a feint and fled.

Then Zhang Yi set his spear and rode forth to continue the fight. He also soon fled and returned within his own ranks. Thereupon, Xu Zhi gave the signal to fall on in force, and the army of Shu lost the day. They retired ten miles, Sima Zhao also drew off his troops, and both sides encamped.

"Xu Zhi is very formidable. How can we overcome him?" asked Jiang Wei.

"Tomorrow, make pretense of defeat and so draw them into an ambush," replied Xiahou Ba.

"But remember whose son this Sima Zhao is," said Jiang Wei. "Sima Zhao cannot be a novice in war. If he sees a likely spot for an ambush, he will halt. Now the troops of Wei have cut our transportation many times. Let us do the same to them, and we may slay this Xu Zhi."

He called in Liao Hua and Zhang Yi and gave them secret orders, sending them in different directions. Then he laid iron thorns along all the approaches and planted thorny barriers as if making a permanent defense.

When the troops of Wei came up and challenged, the troops of Shu refused battle.

The scouts reported to Sima Zhao, "The Shu supplies are coming up along the rear of Iron Cage Mountain, and they are using the wooden oxen and running horses as transport. The Shu army are building permanent defenses and are awaiting the arrival of their allies the Qiang tribes."

Then said Sima Zhao to Xu Zhi, "We formerly defeated the army of Shu by cutting off supplies, and we can do that again. Let five thousand troops go out tonight and occupy the road."

About the middle of the first watch, Xu Zhi marched across the hills. When he came to the other side, he saw a couple hundreds of soldiers driving a hundred or so heads of mechanical animals laden with grain and forage. His army rushed down upon them with shouts, and the troops of Shu, seeing that their road was impassable, abandoned their supplies and ran away. Xu Zhi took possession of the supply train, which he sent back to his own camp under the escort of half his troops. With the other half, he set out in pursuit.

About three miles away, the road was found blocked with carts set across the track. Some of his soldiers dismounted to clear the way. But as they did so, the brushwood on both sides burst into a blaze. Xu Zhi at once drew off his force and turned to retire, but coming to a defile, he found the road again blocked with wagons, and again the brushwood began to burn. He made a dash to escape, but before he could get clear a bomb roared, and he saw the troops of Shu coming down on him from two directions. Liao Hua and Zhang Yi from left and right fell on Xu Zhi with great fury, and the troops of Wei were wholly defeated. Xu Zhi himself got clear, but without any following.

He struggled on till he and his steed were almost spent with fatigue. Presently, he saw another company of the enemy in his way, and the leader was Jiang Wei. Before he could make any resistance, Jiang Wei's spear thrust him down, and as Xu Zhi lay on the ground, he was cut to pieces.

Meanwhile, those troops of Wei who had been sent to escort to camp the convoy of supplies which they had seized were captured by Xiahou Ba. They surrendered. Xiahou Ba then stripped them of their weapons and clothing and therein disguised some of his own soldiers. Holding aloft banners of Wei, these disguised soldiers made for the Wei camp. When they arrived, they were mistaken by those in the camp for comrades, and the gates were thrown open. They rushed in and began to slay. Taken wholly by surprise, Sima Zhao leaped upon his steed and fled. But Liao Hua met him and drove him back. Then appeared Jiang Wei in the path of retreat, so that no road lay open. Sima Zhao made off for the hills, hoping to be able to hold out on Iron Cage Mountain.

Now there was only one road up the hill, which rose steeply on all sides. And the hill had but one small spring of water, enough to serve a hundred people or so, while Sima Zhao's force numbered six thousand. Their enemies had blocked the only road of escape. This one fountain was unequal to supplying the needs of the beleaguered army, and soon they were tormented with thirst.

In despair, Sima Zhao looked up to heaven and sighed, saying, "Death will surely come to me here!"



The host of Wei on Iron Cage Mountain
Were once fast held by Jiang Wei's skill;

When Pang Juan first crossed the Maling Hills,
His strategy was reckoned fine
As Xiang Yu at the Nine Mountains;
Both bent opponents to their will.



In this critical situation, Secretary Wang Tao reminded his leader of what Geng Gong had done in ancient time, saying, “O General, why do you not imitate Geng Gong, who, being in great need, prostrated himself and prayed at a well, wherefrom he afterwards was supplied with sweet water?”

So the leader went to the summit of the hill and knelt beside the spring and prayed thus:

“The humble Sima Zhao received a command to repulse the army of Shu. If he is to die here, then may this spring cease its flow, when he will end his own life and let his soldiers yield to the enemy. But if his allotted span of life be not reached, then, O Blue Vault, increase the flow of water and save the lives of this multitude.”

Thus he prayed, and the waters gushed forth in plenty, so that they all quenched their thirst and lived.

Jiang Wei had surrounded the hill, holding the army thereon as in a prison.

He said to his officers, “I have always regretted that our great Prime Minister was unable to capture Sima Yi in the Gourd Valley, but now I think his son is doomed to fall into our hands!”

However, news of the dangerous position of Sima Zhao had come to Guo Huai, who set about a rescue.

Chen Tai said to him, "Jiang Wei has made a league with the Qiangs, and they have arrived to help him. If you go away to rescue Sima Zhao, the Qiangs will attack from the rear. Therefore, I would propose to send someone to the tribespeople to try to create a diversion and get them to retire. If they are disposed of, you may go to the rescue of Sima Zhao."

Guo Huai saw there was much reason in this, and told Chen Tai to take a force of five thousand troops and go to the camp of the King of the Qiangs. When Chen Tai reached the camp, he threw off his armor and entered, weeping and crying that he was in danger of death.

He said, "Guo Huai sets himself up as superior to everyone and is trying to slay me. Therefore I have come to offer my services to you. I know all the secrets of the Wei army, and, if you will, this very night I can lead you to their camp. I have friends in the camp to help, and you can destroy it."

King Mi Dang was taken with the scheme, and sent his General Ehe Shaoqe to go with Chen Tai. The deserters from Wei were placed in the rear, but Chen Tai himself rode with the leading body of the Qiangs. They set out at the second watch and soon arrived. They found the gates open, and Chen Tai rode in boldly. But when Ehe Shaoqe and his troops galloped in, there suddenly arose a great cry as soldiers and horses went tumbling into great pits. At the same time, Chen Tai came round in the rear and attacked, while Guo Huai appeared on the flank. The Qiangs trampled each other down, and many were killed. Those who escaped death surrendered, and the leader, Ehe Shaoqe, committed suicide in a pit.

Guo Huai and Chen Tai then hastened back into the camp of the Qiangs. Mi Dang, taken unprepared, rushed out of his tent to get to a horse,

but was made prisoner. He was taken before Guo Huai, who hastily dismounted, loosed the prisoner's bonds, and soothed him with kindly words.

"Our government has always regarded you as a loyal and true friend," said Guo Huai. "Why, then, are you helping our enemies?" Mi Dang sank to the ground in confusion, while Guo Huai continued, "If you will now raise the siege of Iron Cage Mountain and drive off the troops of Shu, I will memorialize the Throne and obtain a substantial reward for you."

Mi Dang agreed. He set out forthwith, his own army leading and the army of Wei in the rear. At the third watch, he sent on a messenger to tell Jiang Wei of his coming. And the Shu leader was glad. Mi Dang was invited to come. On the march, the soldiers of Wei had mingled with the Qiangs, and many of them were in the forefront of the army.

As they drew near the camp, Jiang Wei gave the order: "The army are to camp outside. Only the King can enter the gate."

Mi Dang went up toward the gate with a hundred or more followers, and Jiang Wei, with Xiahou Ba, went to welcome him. Just as they met, before Mi Dang could say a word, the Wei generals dashed on past him and set on to slay. Jiang Wei was taken aback, leaped on his steed and fled, while the mixed force of troops of Wei and Qiangs drove the camp defenders before them and sent them flying.

When Jiang Wei leaped upon his steed at the gate, he had no weapon in his hand; only his bow and quiver hung at his shoulder. In his hasty flight, the arrows fell out and the quiver was empty, so when he set off for the hills with Guo Huai in pursuit, Jiang Wei had nothing to oppose the spears of his pursuers. As they came near, he laid hands upon his bow and made as if to shoot. The string twanged, and Guo Huai blenched. But as no arrow went flying by, Guo Huai knew Jiang Wei had none to shoot. Guo

Huai therefore hung his spear, took his bow and shot. Jiang Wei caught the arrow as it flew by and fitted it to his bowstring. He waited till Guo Huai came quite near, when he pulled the string with all his force and sent the arrow flying straight at Guo Huai's face. Guo Huai fell even as the bowstring sang.

Jiang Wei pulled up and turned to finish his fallen enemy, but the soldiers of Wei were nearly upon him, and he had only time to snatch up Guo Huai's spear and ride off. Now that Jiang Wei was armed and their own leader wounded, the soldiers of Wei had no more desire to fight. They picked up their general and carried him to camp. There the arrowhead was pulled out, but the flow of blood could not be stanchd, and Guo Huai died.

Sima Zhao descended from the hill as soon as Jiang Wei moved away, and pursued some distance before returning.

Xiahou Ba forced his way out and rejoined Jiang Wei as soon as he could, and they marched away together. The losses of Shu in this defeat were very heavy. On the road they dared not halt to muster or reform, but went helter-skelter into Hanzhong. In that campaign, though the Shu army were defeated, they had killed Xu Zhi and Guo Huai on the other side and had damaged the prestige of Wei. Thus, Jiang Wei's achievement made up for his offense.

After rewarding the Qiangs for their help, Sima Zhao led his army back to Capital Luoyang, where he joined his brother Sima Shi in administering the government. They were too strong for any of the officers to dare opposition, and they terrorized Cao Fang, the Ruler of Wei, so that he shook with fright

whenever he saw Sima Shi at court, and felt as if needles were being stuck into his back.

One day, when the Ruler of Wei was holding a court, Sima Shi came into the hall wearing his sword. Cao Fang hastily left his dragon throne to receive him.

“What does this mean? Is this the correct etiquette for a prince when his minister approaches?” said Sima Shi, smiling. “I pray Your Majesty remember your dignity and listen while the ministers address the Throne.”

Court business then proceeded. Sima Shi decided every question without reference to the Ruler of Wei, and when Sima Shi retired, he stalked haughtily down the hall and went home, followed by his escort, which numbered thousands of horse- and foot-men.

When the Ruler of Wei left the court, only three followed him to the private apartments. They were Minister Xiahou Xuan, Secretary Li Feng, and High Minister Zhang Qi. Zhang Qi was the father of his consort, Empress Zhang. Sending away the servants, Cao Fang and these three went into a private chamber.

Seizing his father-in-law's hand, Cao Fang began to weep, saying, “That man Sima Shi treats me as a child and regards the officers of state as if they were so many straws. I am sure the throne will be his one day.”

And he wept bitterly.

Said Li Feng, “Do not be so sad, Sire. I am but a poor sort of person. But if Your Majesty will give me authority, I will call together all the bold people in the country and slay this man.”

“It was from fear of this man that my brother Xiahou Ba was forced to go over to Shu,” said Xiahou Xuan. “If Sima Shi were destroyed, my brother could return. I belong to a family related to the rulers of the state for

many generations, and I cannot sit still while a wretch ruins the government. Put my name in the command as well, and we will work together to remove him.”

“But I am afraid we can not overcome him,” said Cao Fang.

They wept and said, “We pledge ourselves to work together for the destruction of the tyrant, and to show our gratitude to Your Majesty!”

Cao Fang then stripped himself of his innermost garment, gnawed his finger till the blood flowed, and with his fingertip traced a command in blood.

He gave it to his father-in-law, Zhang Qi, saying, “My ancestor, Emperor Cao, put to death Dong Cheng for just such a matter as this, so you must be exceedingly careful and maintain the greatest secrecy.”

“Oh, why use such ill-omened words?” cried Li Feng. “We are not like Dong Cheng, and Sima Shi cannot compare to the Founder. Have no doubts.”

The three conspirators took leave and went out carrying the edict with them. Beside the Donghua Gate of the Palace, they saw Sima Shi coming to meet them, wearing a sword. Following him were many armed guards. The three ministers took the side of the road to let the party go by.

“Why are you three so late in leaving the Palace?” asked Sima Shi.

“His Majesty was reading, and we stayed with him,” said Li Feng.

“What was he reading?”

“The histories of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties.”

“What questions did the Emperor ask as he read those books?”

“He asked about Yi Yin and how he upheld the Shang; and the Duke of Zhou, how he acted when he was regent. And we told His Majesty that you were both Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou to him.”

Sima Shi smiled grimly and said, “Why did you compare me with those two when in your hearts you think me a rebel like Wang Mang and Dong Zhuo?”

“How should we dare when we are your subordinates?” said the three ministers.

“You are a lot of flatterers,” said Sima Shi, angrily. “And what were you crying about in that private chamber with the Emperor?”

“We did no such thing.”

“Your eyes are still red; you cannot deny that!”

Xiahou Xuan then knew that the secrecy had been showed, so he broke out into a volley of abuse, crying, “Well, we were crying because of your conduct, because you terrorize over the Emperor and are scheming to usurp the Throne!”

“Seize him!” roared Sima Shi.

Xiahou Xuan threw back his sleeves and struck at Sima Shi with his fists, but the lictors pulled him back. Then the three were searched, and on Zhang Qi was found the blood-stained garment of the Emperor. They handed it to their chief, who recognized the object of his search, the secret edict. It said:

“The two Sima brothers have stolen away all my authority and are plotting to take the Throne. The edicts I have been forced to issue do not represent my wishes, and hereby, all officers, civil and military, may unite to destroy these two and restore the authority of the Throne. These ends achieved, I will reward those who help to accomplish them.”

Sima Shi, more angry than ever, said, "So you wish to destroy me and my brother. This is too much!"

He ordered his followers to execute the three on the public ground by waist-bisection and to destroy their whole clans.

The three reviled without ceasing. On the way to the place of execution, they ground their teeth with rage, spitting out the pieces they broke off. They died muttering curses.

Sima Shi then went to the rear apartments of the Palace, where he found the Emperor talking with his Consort.

Just as he entered, she was saying to the Emperor, "The Palace is full of spies, and if this comes out, it will mean trouble for me."

Sima Shi strode in, sword in hand.

"My father placed Your Majesty on the throne, a service no less worthy than that of Duke Zhou; I have served Your Majesty as Yi Yin served his master. Now is kindness met by enmity and service regarded as a fault. Your Majesty has plotted with two or three insignificant officials to slay me and my brother. Why is this?"

"I had no such intention," said Cao Fang.

In reply, Sima Shi drew the garment from his sleeve and threw it on the ground.

"Who did this?"

Cao Fang was overwhelmed; his soul flew beyond the skies, his spirit lied to the ninth heaven.

Shaking with fear, he said, "I was forced into it. How could I think of such a thing?"

"To slander ministers by charging them with rebellion is an aggravated crime," said Sima Shi.

Cao Fang knelt at his feet, saying, “Yes, I am guilty. Forgive me.”

“I beg Your Majesty to rise; the laws must be respected!”

Pointing to Empress Zhang, Sima Shi said, “She is of the Zhang house and must die!”

“Spare her!” cried Cao Fang, weeping bitterly.

But Sima Shi was obdurate. He bade the lictors lead her away, and she was strangled with a white silk cord at a Palace gate.



Now I recall another year; and lo!

An empress borne away to shameful death.

Barefooted, weeping bitterly she shrieks

“Farewell,” torn from her consort’s arms.

History repeats itself; time’s instrument,

Sima Shi avenges this on Cao Cao’s heirs.



The day after these events, Sima Shi assembled all the officers and addressed them thus: “Our present lord is profligate and devoid of principle, familiar with the vile and friendly with the impure. He lends a ready ear to slander and keeps good people at a distance. His faults exceed those of the Prince of Changyi of old, and he has proven himself unfit to rule. Wherefore, following the precedents of Yi Yin and Huo Guang, I have decided to put him aside and to set up another, thereby to maintain the sanctity of the ruler and ensure tranquility. What think you, Sirs?”

They all agreed, saying, "General, you are right to play the same part as Yi Yin and Huo Guang, thereby acting in accordance with Heaven and fulfilling the desire of humankind. Who dares dispute it?"

Then Sima Shi, followed by the whole of the officials, went to the Palace of Everlasting Peace and informed the Empress Dowager of his intention.

"Whom do you propose to place on the throne, General?" she asked.

"I have observed that Cao Ju, Prince of Pengcheng, is intelligent, benevolent, and filial. He is fit to rule the empire."

She replied, "He is my uncle, and it is not convenient. However, there is Cao Mao, Duke of Gaogui, and grandson of Emperor Pi. He is of mild temperament, respectful, and deferential, and may be set up. You, Sir, and the high officers of state might favorably consider this."

Then spoke one, saying, "Her Majesty speaks well: Cao Mao should be raised to the throne."

All eyes turned toward the speaker, who was Sima Fu, uncle of Sima Shi.

The Duke of Gaogui was summoned to the capital.

The Empress called Cao Fang into her presence in the Hall of Principles and blamed him, saying, "You are vicious beyond measure, a companion of lewd men and a friend of vile women. You are unfitted to rule. Therefore, resign the imperial seal and revert to your status of Prince of Qi. You are forbidden to present yourself at court without special command."

Cao Fang, weeping, threw himself at her feet. He gave up the seal, got into his carriage, and went away. Only a few faithful ministers restrained their tears and bade him farewell.



Cao Cao, the mighty minister of Han,
Oppressed the helpless; little then thought he
That only two score swiftly passing years
Would bring like fate to his posterity.



The Emperor-elect Cao Mao was the grandson of Emperor Pi, and son of Cao Lin, Prince of Donghai. When Cao Mao was nearing the capital, all the officers attended to receive him at the Nanye Gate, where an imperial carriage awaited him. He hastily returned their salutations.

“The ruler ought not to return these salutations,” said Grand Commander Wang Su.

“I also am a minister and must respond,” replied he.

They conducted him to the carriage to ride into the Palace, but he refused to mount it, saying, “Her Majesty has commanded my presence; I know not for what reason. How dare I enter the Palace in such a carriage?”

He went on foot to the Hall, where Sima Shi awaited him. He prostrated himself before Sima Shi. Sima Shi hastily raised him and led him into audience.

The Empress Dowager said, “In your youth, I noticed that you bore the impress of majesty. Now, you are to be the Ruler of the Empire. You must be respectful and moderate, diffusing virtue and benevolence. You must do honor to your ancestors, the former emperors.”

Cao Mao modestly declined the proposed honor, but he was compelled to accept it. He was led out of the presence of the Empress Dowager and

placed in the seat of empire in the Hall of Principles.

The style of the reign was changed from Domestic Calm, the sixth year, to Right Origin, the first year (AD 254). An amnesty was granted. Honors were heaped upon Sima Shi, who also received the golden axes, with the right to proceed leisurely within the precincts, to address the Throne without using his name, and to wear arms at court. Many other officers also received promotions.

But in the spring of the second year of Right Origin, it was reported at court that Guanqiu Jian, General Who Guards the East, and Wen Qin, Imperial Protector of Yangzhou, were raising armies with the declared design of restoring the deposed emperor.

Sima Shi became disconcerted.

If ministers of Han have always faithful been,
Wei leaders, too, prove their loyalty are keen.

How this new menace was met will appear in the next chapter.



END OF ACT XXIV

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XXV:

WEI'S LAST BREATH: THE SHOUCHUN REBELLIONS . CAO MAO'S COUP

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXV

CHAPTER 110

RIDING ALONE, WEN YANG REPULSES A BRAVE FORCE; FOLLOWING
THE RIVER, JIANG WEI DEFEATS THE ENEMY.

It has been said that in the second year of Right Origin (AD 256), Guanqiu Jian, of the South of River Huai, General Who Guards the East, was commanding the forces in River Huai when he heard the news that Sima Shi deposed Cao Fang.

He was moved to great anger, and his eldest son, Guanqiu Dian, fomented his father's wrath, saying, "Father, you are chief of all this region. With this Sima Shi in such a position, the country is in danger, and you cannot sit still and look on."

"My son, you speak well!" replied Guanqiu Jian.

Whereupon, he requested Wen Qin, Imperial Protector of Yangzhou, to come and consult with him. This Wen Qin had been a client of Cao Shuang's, and he hastened at the call of the general. When he arrived, he was led into the private apartments, and, the salutations at an end, the two began to talk over the situation. Presently, the host began to weep, and his visitor asked the cause of his tears.

"Think you that this conduct of Sima Shi does not tear my heart? He has deposed the Emperor and now holds in his grip all authority of the state. Things are all upside-down."

Wen Qin replied, "You are the chief of this region. If you are willing to play the part, you ought to take arms and slay this rebel. I will help you, regardless of consequences. My second son, Wen Yang, is a good warrior

and a man of great valor. Moreover, he hates Sima Shi and wishes to avenge on the Sima brothers the death of Cao Shuang. He would make an excellent Leader of the Van.”

Guanqiu Jian was delighted to get such ready and willing support, and the two poured a libation in pledge of mutual good faith. Then, pretending that they held an edict from the Empress Dowager, they summoned all the officers to Shouchun, where they built an altar on the west side and sacrificed a white horse, smearing their lips with its blood in token of their oath.

They made this declaration:

“Sima Shi is a rebel and devoid of rectitude. We have a secret edict commanding us to muster the forces of the South of River Huai and put down this rebellion.”

Thus supported, Guanqiu Jian led sixty thousand troops to Xiangcheng, where he camped, while his fellow-conspirator Wen Qin took twenty thousand troops to the front to go to and fro, lending help where it was needed. Letters were sent all through the counties and territories calling for assistance.

Now that mole below the left eye of Sima Shi used to pain at times, and he decided to have it removed. The surgeon excised it, closed and dressed the wound, and the patient rested quietly in his palace till it should heal.

It was at this time that he received the disquieting news of opposition to his authority. Whereupon, he called in Grand Commander Wang Su to discuss the matter.

Said Wang Su, "When Guan Yu was most famous, Sun Quan sent Lu Meng to capture Jingzhou by surprise. What did Lu Meng do? He first won over the officers of Guan Yu by taking care of their families and thus broke the power of his enemy like a tile.

"Now the families of all the officers in the South of River Huai are here in the Middle Land. Treat them well, at the same time taking care that they do not get away, and you will be irresistible."

"Your words are good," said Sima Shi. "However, I cannot go out to war till I have recovered. Yet, to send another is to take great risks, and I shall feel insecure."

There was also present Secretary Zhong Hui, who here interposed, saying, "The forces of the South of River Huai and Chu are very formidable. If you send another, there is danger whatever happens; if your leader makes a serious mistake, your whole policy will fail."

"No one but myself can succeed," cried Sima Shi, starting from his couch. "I must go."

So, in spite of illness, he resolved to lead in person. He left his brother in charge of affairs at Luoyang and set out, traveling in a padded carriage.

Zhuge Dan, General Who Guards the East, was given command over all the forces of Yuzhou and ordered to march from Anfeng and to take possession of Shouchun. Hu Zun, General Who Conquers the East, with the Qingzhou forces, was sent to bar any retreat at Qiaosong. Wang Ji, Imperial Protector of Yuzhou and Army Inspector, was sent to capture Chennan.

To his camp at Xiangyang, Sima Shi summoned all his officers to a council.

Minister Zheng Mao spoke first, saying, "Guanqiu Jian is fond of laying plans but slow to come to any decision. His fellow-conspirator Wen

Qin is bold but imprudent. Now this scheme of theirs is too large for their minds. But as their soldiers are full of spirit, they should not be engaged lightly. We should remain on the defensive till their ardor has burned out. This is what Zhou Yafu of old time did.”

But Army Inspector Wang Ji objected, saying, “This is not a rising of the people, nor of the soldiers, but is the work of Guanqiu Jian. The people are merely his tools and cannot help themselves. The rebellion will go to pieces as soon as an army approaches the region.”

“I agree with you,” replied Sima Shi.

Then he advanced upon River Ying and camped by the bridge.

Wang Ji said, “The city of Nandun is an excellent camping ground. Occupy it at once, for if not, the enemy will do so.”

Sima Shi sent Wang Ji to carry out his own plan.

Reports of these movements of the enemy came to Guanqiu Jian in Xiangcheng, and an assembly of officers was called.

The Leader of the Van, Ge Yong, said, “Nandun is an excellent site for a camp, with a river beside it and hills at the rear. If the Wei armies camp there, we shall be unable to dislodge them. Let us occupy it.”

So the army set out. But before they drew near, the scouts reported a camp already there. It was incredible, and Guanqiu Jian rode to the front to reconnoiter. He was convinced by the sight of flags and banners over all the plain, fluttering above an orderly array of tents and huts. The sight disconcerted him, and he rode back to the main body, not knowing what to do.

Just then a scout came in to say, “Sun Jun of Wu has crossed the river to attack Shouchun.”

“If we lose that city, we shall have no base,” cried Guanqiu Jian.

That same night, he retreated upon Xiangcheng.

Seeing the enemy retreat, Sima Shi called together his officers to talk it over.

Chair of the Secretariat Fu Gu, who was of the expedition, said, “The retirement to Xiangcheng was obviously due to Wu’s threatened attack upon Shouchun. General, you should send three armies to attack upon Xiangcheng, Lojia, and Shouchun. The Imperial Protector of Yanzhou, Deng Ai, is a man of tactics; he should be sent against Lojia. Our main army will reinforce them.”

His plan was acceptable to Sima Shi, who sent letters to Yanzhou telling Deng Ai to march against Lojia, where Sima Shi himself would soon meet him.

Camped at Xiangcheng, Guanqiu Jian sent spies to Lojia to see what might be happening there, for he feared it would be attacked.

When he spoke of his fears to Wen Qin, the latter said, “General, you need not be anxious. My son Wen Yang and I will answer for its safety. Give us but five thousand troops.”

Father and son, with the five thousand troops, went to Lojia.

Before the main body arrived, the scouts reported, “Wei banners are flying on the west of the city. There are about ten thousand troops. In their midst are seen authority ensigns such as white yaks’ tails, golden axes,

purple umbrellas, and a flag bearing the word “Commander.” Perhaps Sima Shi himself is at this camp. The troops are pitching the camp rapidly, but it is not yet complete.”

When this was reported to Wen Qin, his son Wen Yang, bearing his famous whip of steel, was by his father’s side.

“We should attack before they have settled down in camp, Father,” said he. “Let us go quickly and attack on two sides.”

“When can we start?” said the father.

“Tonight at dusk. You lead half the force round by the south, and I will march the other half round by the north, and we will meet in the third watch at the Wei camp.”

The youth who propounded this plan was then eighteen, tall and strong. He wore complete armor and carried at his waist a steel whip. When the hour came to start, he took his spear, swung himself into the saddle, and set out.

That night, Sima Shi, who had arrived and had at once set about settling into camp, lay on a couch in his tent, for he was still suffering pain from the surgery wound beneath his eye. The tent was surrounded by several hundred armored guards. Deng Ai had not arrived.

About the third watch, Sima Shi heard a great shouting and asked what it was.

One replied, “An army has come round from the north and burst into the lines. The leader is too bold for anyone to face.”

Sima Shi became much troubled. His heart burned within him, and the excitement caused the wound to open, so that the eyeball protruded and blood flowed freely. The pain became intense, nearly unbearable. In his

agony and alarm, lest his army should be thrown into confusion, he lay gnawing the bed clothes till they were in rags.

Wen Yang's force lost no time, but attacked as soon as it arrived. He dashed into the camp, slashing and thrusting right and left, and everyone gave way before him. If anyone stayed to oppose, the sharp spear or the terrible whip did its work, and that one fell. But after a time, seeing no sign of his father, Wen Yang grew anxious. And he had to retire several times before the fierce flights of arrows and crossbow bolts as he tried to reach the main tent.

About daylight, he heard shouts and thought they must mean the arrival of his father with help. But the shouting came from the north, and his father was to arrive by the south road. He galloped out to get a clearer view, and saw a force sweeping down like a gale of wind.

It was not his father, but a body of the enemy, and the leader was Deng Ai.

Deng Ai rode forward shouting, "Rebel, flee not!"

Wen Yang had no intention to flee. Setting his spear, he rode savagely toward his opponent. They engaged and fought half a hundred bouts without either gaining the advantage. Then, the duel still raging, the Wei army attacked in full force, and Wen Yang's troops began to give way and run, so that soon he found himself alone.

However, he got clear of the fight and went away south. But he was pursued, for more than a hundred Wei generals plucked up courage to follow when he ran away. They pressed on his heels till near the Lojia Bridge, when it seemed that they must catch him. Then, he suddenly pulled up his steed, turned, and rode in among them, flogging with the terrible steel whip, and wherever it struck, there lay warriors and horses in confused heaps. So they left him, and he retook his way in peace.

Then the Wei generals met and said, "Lo! Here is a man who has driven us all backward. But we are many and may not suffer that."

Wherefore, they reformed and once again took up pursuit.

"You fools!" cried Wen Yang, as he saw them coming on. "Have you then no regard for your lives?"

Again he fell upon them with the steel whip and slew many, so that the survivors retreated. But yet again they found courage to come on, and yet again, but they had to fall back before the lash of that terrible whip.



Defiance hurled at Cao Cao's mighty host
Arrayed near Long Slope proclaimed Zhao Yun,
A valiant man; and peerless stood he till
At Lojia another hero faced,
Alone, another host, and Wen Yang's name
Was added to the roll of famous people.



Wen Qin never reached the appointed rendezvous. In the darkness, he lost his way among the precipices and gullies, whence he only got out as day dawned. He saw all the signs of a fight and a victory for Wei, but could not discover whither his son had gone. So he returned without fighting, and in spite of pursuit, made his way safely to Shouchun.

Now Commander Yin Damu had accompanied Sima Shi on his expedition, but was no friend of his. He had been of Cao Shuang's party and bitterly resented the death of his patron. He was watching for a chance to avenge him. Seeing that Sima Shi was ill, he thought to secure his end by making friends with Wen Qin.

So he went in to see the sick Sima Shi, and said, "Wen Qin had no sincere intention to rebel but was led astray by Guanqiu Jian. If you will let me go and speak with him, he will come over to you at once."

Sima Shi said he might go to try, and Yin Damu put on his armor and rode after Wen Qin. By and by, he got near enough to shout.

"Do you not recognize me? I am Yin Damu."

Wen Qin stopped and looked back.

Yin Damu removed his helmet that his face might be clearly seen, and said, "O Imperial Protector, why can you not bear up for a few days?"

Yin Damu implied that Sima Shi was very near death, and he wished Wen Qin to remain at hand. But Wen Qin did not understand. He abused Yin Damu and even threatened that the bowmen should shoot, and Yin Damu could only sorrowfully turn away.

When Wen Qin reached Shouchun and found it occupied by Zhuge Dan, he tried for Xiangcheng. But three armies under Hu Zun, Wang Ji, and Deng Ai came up and attacked at once so that it seemed impossible that his army could hold out long. So he decided to flee to Wu and serve Sun Jun.

Guanqiu Jian, then behind the walls of Xiangcheng, heard that Shouchun had fallen, that his fellow-conspirator Wen Qin had failed, and,

with three armies against his city, knew that his case was desperate. He mustered all the forces in the city and marched out to try his fortune.

As he went forth, he fell in with Deng Ai. He bade Ge Yong go out to fight, but Ge Yong fell in the first encounter, cut down by Deng Ai himself. The enemy came on in force. Guanqiu Jian fought gallantly, but his army fell into confusion. Then, two other armies under Wang Ji and Hu Zun came up, and he was completely surrounded. Nothing could be done, and he fled from the field with a dozen riders and made for Shengxian.

Here, Governor Song Bai received him kindly and comforted him with a feast. At the banquet, Guanqiu Jian drowned his sorrows in the wine cup till he was helpless, when he was slain by his host. His head was sent to the Wei army as proof of his death, and the rising came to an end. Peace was restored in the South of River Huai.

Sima Shi grew worse. Recovery being hopeless, he called Zhuge Dan to his tent and gave him a seal and conferred upon him the title of General Who Conquers the East, with command of all the forces in Yangzhou, and soon after, the army marched back to Xuchang.

The sick man began to have visions. Night after night, he was troubled by the apparitions of the three courtiers—Zhang Qi, Li Feng, and Xiahou Xuan—he had put to death, and he knew that his end was near. He sent for his brother, Sima Zhao, who came and wept by his couch while he listened to his elder brother's last commands.

Said Sima Shi, "The responsibility of power is heavy, but we must bear it; there is no possible relief. You must continue my plans and maintain my policy yourself, and you must be exceedingly careful how you entrust

any other with power, lest you bring about the destruction of our whole clan.”

Then Sima Shi handed the seal of office to Sima Zhao, weeping the while. Sima Zhao would ask some questions still, but with a deep groan as his eye popped out, Sima Shi died. It was the second month of the second year of Right Origin (AD 256).

Sima Zhao put on mourning for his brother and informed the Ruler of Wei, Cao Mao, of the death. By special edict, Sima Zhao was ordered to remain at Xuchang so as to guard against any attack from Wu. This order was unpleasing to its recipient, but he felt doubtful what to do.

Sima Zhao took counsel with Zhong Hui, who said, “The death of your brother has disturbed the country. If you remain here, some shifting of power at the capital will surely work to your disadvantage. It will be too late for regrets then.”

Wherefore, Sima Zhao left Xuchang and camped on River Luo. This move alarmed Cao Mao.

Then, Grand Commander Wang Su advised, saying, “Sima Zhao has succeeded the office of his late brother. It is well that Your Majesty should placate him with a new title.”

So Cao Mao sent Wang Su with an edict creating Sima Zhao Regent Marshal, with control of the Secretariat. Sima Zhao came to Luoyang to thank the Emperor for these honors and stayed. Henceforward, all matters and the whole government were under Sima Zhao’s hand.

When news of these things came to Chengdu, Jiang Wei thought the time had come to make another bid for the empire, so he wrote a memorial to the

Latter Ruler:

“Sima Shi having just died, his brother, Sima Zhao, who succeeds, will be unable to leave Luoyang until he has consolidated his position. Wherefore I crave permission to attack Wei.”

The Latter Ruler agreed and bade him raise an army. So he went into Hanzhong to prepare for the expedition.

However, Zhang Yi, General Who Conquers the West, was opposed to the expedition and said, “Shu is not a big country, and its resources are not too abundant. Thus, a far expedition should be avoided. The state policy should rather be the improvement of conditions at home. Thinking well for the soldiers and the people is the way to preserve the country.”

“You are mistaken,” said Jiang Wei. “Before our great Minister Zhuge Liang emerged from his reed hut in the wilds and undertook the affairs of a state, the three kingdoms were already a fact. Six times he led armies to try to gain the northern portion of the empire, but failed to attain his desire. Unhappily he died, leaving his design unaccomplished. But he bequeathed to me the legacy of his intention, and I must be a loyal and worthy executor. If I die in the attempt, I will perish without regret. Now is our opportunity, and if we miss it, shall we find a better?”

“What you say is the real truth,” said Xiahou Ba. “Let us send first some light cavalry out by Baohan to capture Nan'an and thereby settle that county.”

Then, said Zhang Yi, “Procrastination and delay have been hitherto the causes of our failure. We ought to obey the precepts of the books of war: strike where the enemy is unprepared and appear where he does not expect

us. A rapid march and a sudden blow will find Wei unready, and we shall succeed.”

So Jiang Wei led an army of fifty thousand troops out by Baohan. When he reached River Tao, the spies reported his arrival to Wang Jing, Imperial Protector of Yongzhou, who led out seventy thousand troops against him. Jiang Wei gave certain orders to Zhang Yi and Xiahou Ba, and after they had marched, he drew up the main body by River Tao.

Wang Jing rode out to parley. “Wu, Shu, and Wei are now actually established as a tripod. Why, then, have you invaded our borders these many times?”

Jiang Wei replied, “Because Sima Shi deposed his prince without cause, and it behooves the neighboring countries to punish such a crime. Moreover, your country is a rival state.”

Then Wang Jing turned and said to four of his generals, Zhang Ming, Hua Yong, Liu Dan, and Zhu Fang, “You see that the enemy is drawn up with a river at his back, so that his troops must conquer or drown. Though Jiang Wei is bold, you four can fight him at the same time and pursue if he retires.”

The four rode out two and two. Jiang Wei stood through a few encounters but then moved backward toward his camp. At this, Wang Jing led on his main body to smite. Jiang Wei fled toward the river.

As he drew near, he shouted, “Danger, O Generals! Now do your utmost!”

His generals turned on the foe and fought with such vigor that the Wei army was defeated, and, as they turned away, Zhang Yi and Xiahou Ba fell upon their rear. Soon the Wei army was hemmed in, and Jiang Wei rushed in among the host of Wei and threw them into utter confusion. They trod

each other down in the press, and many fell into the river. Dead bodies lay about over several miles.

Wang Jing and a hundred horsemen forced their way out and fled to Didao, where they entered within the walls and barred the gates.

After Jiang Wei had rewarded and feasted his army, he was for attacking Didao, but Zhang Yi was against this.

“General, you have won a great victory, which will bring you fame. If you attempt more, things may go astray, and you will only add legs to your sketch of a serpent.”

Said Jiang Wei, “When our army was defeated not long ago, they still desired to overrun the whole north. Now our opponents have been overcome, and that has broken the spirit of their army, and this city can be easily captured. Do not damp the spirit of the soldiers.”

So it was decided to attack Didao despite further remonstrances of Zhang Yi.

Chen Tai, General Who Conquers the West and Commander of Yongzhou, was just about to set out to avenge the defeat of Wang Jing, when Deng Ai, Imperial Protector of Yanzhou, arrived with his army. Chen Tai welcomed him, and when Deng Ai had said he had come by imperial edict to assist in the defeat of the army of Shu, Chen Tai asked his plans.

Deng Ai replied, “They are victors on River Tao. If they enlist the aid of the Qiangs to cause a diversion in the West Valley Land and the Land Within the Passes, and also obtain the support of the four counties, it will be a misfortune for us. If they do not think of that but try to take Didao, they will only fritter away their energies against a place too strongly fortified for

them to capture. Let us now array our force along the Xiangling Mountain, and then we can advance and smite them. We shall get a victory.”

“That is well said!” cried Chen Tai.

Then twenty cohorts of fifty soldiers each were told off to find their way secretly to the southeast of Didao and, there, hide in the valleys. They were then to display many ensigns and sound trumpets as if they were a very large force, and make huge fires at night, so as to cause anxiety among the enemy. And thus they waited for the troops of Shu to come, while Chen Tai and Deng Ai marched with forty thousand troops against the Shu army.

The army of Shu had marched to Didao and begun the siege around the whole circuit of the walls. At the end of many days, the fall of the city seemed no nearer, and Jiang Wei began to fret. He could think of no plan likely to succeed.

One eventide, a horseman came in to report, “Two armies are approaching rapidly, and the names on the banners are ‘General Who Conquers the West Chen Tai’ and ‘Imperial Protector of Yanzhou Deng Ai.’”

Jiang Wei called in his colleague Xiahou Ba, who said, “I have spoken to you of Deng Ai many times. He is perspicacious, valiant, resourceful, and has always delighted in the study of military topography. As he is coming, we shall have to put forth all our energies.”

Jiang Wei replied, “We will attack before he can get a foothold and while his soldiers are fatigued with the march.”

So Zhang Yi was left to carry on the siege while the two leaders went out to meet the new armies. Jiang Wei went against Deng Ai, and Xiahou

Ba against Chen Tai.

Before Jiang Wei had marched far, the stillness was broken by the roar of a bomb, and at once, all about the Shu army arose the rolling of drums and the blare of trumpets, soon followed by flames that shot up to the very sky. Jiang Wei rode to the front and saw the ensigns of Wei all about him.

“I have fallen into a trap set by Deng Ai!” cried he.

He sent orders to Xiahou Ba and Zhang Yi to withdraw immediately while he would cover their retreat. When they had retired, he followed them into Hanzhong, harassed all along the road by the sounds of marching soldiers and glimpses of enemy banners. But these enemies never attacked. It was only after the army had retreated to Saber Pass that Jiang Wei knew all this was make-believe.

He camped in Zhongti. For his services and success on River Tao, Jiang Wei was rewarded with the rank of Regent Marshal. As soon as the ceremonies connected with his promotion were ended, he began again to talk of an expedition against Wei.

Remember enough is as good as a feast,
Having sketched a good snake, don't add legs to the
beast;
And in fighting remember that others are bold,
And tigers have claws though their teeth may be old.

The result of the new expedition will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXV

CHAPTER 111

DENG AI OUTWITS JIANG WEI; ZHUGE DAN BATTLES SIMA ZHAO.

Jiang Wei camped at Zhongti. The army of Wei camped outside Didao. Wang Jing welcomed Chen Tai and Deng Ai and prepared a banquet to celebrate the raising of the siege and also rewarded the army with gifts. Then Chen Tai sent up a memorial to the Ruler of Wei, Cao Mao, eulogizing the magnificent services of Deng Ai, who was rewarded with the title General Who Pacifies the West. For the time, Deng Ai was left in the west. He and Chen Tai placed their men in cantonments in Yongzhou, Liangzhou, and the counties round about.

After Deng Ai had rendered his thanks to the Emperor, Chen Tai spread a great feast in his honor, and in congratulating his guest, said, "Jiang Wei slipped off in the night because he was broken, and he will never dare to return."

"I think he will," replied Deng Ai, smiling. "I can give five reasons why he should."

"What are they?"

"First, although the soldiers of Shu have retired, they have the self-possessed and confident look of holding the victory; our soldiers are really weak and broken. Second, the soldiers of Shu were trained and inspired by Zhuge Liang and are easy to mobilize; our generals are all of different periods of service, and our army indifferently trained. Third, the Shu soldiers often use boats for traveling, and so they move at leisure and the troops arrive fresh; ours do all their journeys on land, and they arrive

fatigued with marching. Fourth, again, Didao, Longxi, Nanan, and Qishan are all places suitable for defense or use as battlefields, and thus the army of Shu can conceal their intentions and strike where they will; we have to remain on guard at many points, thus dividing our forces; when they concentrate, they have only to reckon with a part of our force. And fifth, if they come out by way of Longxi and Nanan, they have the grain of the Qiangs to depend upon, and if they choose Qishan, they have the wheat there. These are the five reasons why they should make another expedition.”

Chen Tai was overcome with the clear vision of his new colleague. “Sir, your foresight is godlike. I think we need feel no anxiety about what the enemy can achieve.”

The two leaders became the best of friends in spite of the difference of age. Deng Ai spent his time in training the army, and garrisons were placed at all points where surprise attacks seemed possible.

There was feasting also at Zhongti, and the occasion was taken to discuss a new attack on Wei.

But Assistant Fan Jian opposed. “General, your expeditions have partly failed many times; you have never scored a complete victory. But now, on River Tao the army of Wei recognizes your superiority, and why should you try again? There is small chance of success, and you risk all you have gained.”

Jiang Wei replied, “You all regard only the largeness and population of Wei and the time necessary for conquest, but you do not see five reasons for victory.”

The assembly asked what these were.

“First, the fighting spirit of the soldiers of Wei has been badly broken on River Tao, while that of our soldiers, although we retired, is unimpaired. If we attack, we shall certainly succeed. Second, our soldiers can travel in boats and so will not be wearied with marching; their soldiers have to march to meet us. Third, our soldiers are thoroughly trained; theirs are recruits, a mere flock of crows, quite undisciplined. Fourth, when we go out by Qishan, we can seize upon the autumn wheat for food. Finally, they are scattered, having to defend various points, while we can concentrate on any point we wish, and they will find it difficult to bring up reinforcements. If we miss this chance, can we hope for a better?”

Xiahou Ba said, “Deng Ai is young, but he is deep and crafty. He has certainly taken great pains to secure the regions under his charge as General Who Pacifies the West. Victory will not be so easy as it was before.”

“Why should I fear him?” cried Jiang Wei, angrily. “You should not laud the spirit of the enemy and belittle that of our own soldiers. But in any case, I have made up my mind and shall take the West Valley Land.”

No one dared to offer any further opposition. Jiang Wei himself led the first army, the others followed in due order, and thus, the soldiers of Shu marched out of Zhongti to Qishan.

Before they could reach Qishan, the scouts reported the hills already occupied by the armies of Wei. Jiang Wei rode forward to verify this, and surely enough, he saw the Wei camps, nine in number, stretching over the hills like a huge serpent, and all arranged to give each other support.

“Xiahou Ba spoke only too well,” said he. “The plan of those camps is excellent and only our Zhuge Liang could have laid them out with equal skill.”

Returning to his own army, he said to his officers, “They must have known of my coming, and I think Deng Ai is here too. Now, from this as base, you are to send out daily small reconnoitering parties showing my banner, but different flags and uniforms—blue, yellow, red, white, and black—in turns. While you are thus distracting attention, I will lead the main army by Dongting to attack Nanan.”

Bao Su was sent to camp at the mouth of the Qishan Mountains Valley while the main army marched.

As soon as Deng Ai had heard that the enemy would come out at Qishan, he had camped there with his colleague Chen Tai. But when days had passed without anyone coming to fling a challenge, he sent out spies to find out where the Shu army was lurking. They could find nothing, and so Deng Ai went to the summit of a hill to look around.

He came to the conclusion, saying, “Jiang Wei must not be in this camp. He must be on his way to capture Nanan. Those soldiers in the Shu camp were nothing but a feint, accentuated by the daily change of uniform. Going to and fro for days, the horses look tired, and their leaders are certainly none of the ablest. Therefore, General, I advise an attack here. If that succeeds, the Dongting road can be occupied, and Jiang Wei will be unable to retreat. I think I ought to try to relieve Nanan. I will go by Wucheng Mountain, and if I occupy that, the enemy will try to take Shanggui. Near that place is a narrow and precipitous valley called Block Valley, just the place for an ambush, where I shall lie in wait till Jiang Wei comes to take Wucheng Mountain.”

Chen Tai replied, "I have been here over twenty years and have never known so much of the military possibilities of the place. You are very wonderful and must carry out your plan."

So Deng Ai marched toward Nanan by double marches. Soon they came to Wucheng Mountain, where they camped without opposition. He sent his son Deng Zhong and Shi Zuan, each leading five thousand troops, to lie in wait in the Block Valley and not to betray their presence.

In the meantime, Jiang Wei was marching between Dongting and Nanan.

Near Wucheng Mountain, he turned to Xiahou Ba and said, "That hill is our point, and Nanan is close. I fear lest the artful Deng Ai may seize and fortify it."

They hastened, anxious to reach the hill before the enemy. But it was not to be. Presently, they heard the roar of bombs and the beating of drums, and then flags and banners appeared, all of Wei. And among them fluttered the leader's standard, bearing two words: "Deng Ai."

This was a sad disappointment. The army of Shu halted, and veteran soldiers of Wei came rushing down from various points on the hill, too many for the troops of Shu to drive back. So the advance guard was defeated. Jiang Wei went to their help with his central body, but when he got near, the soldiers of Wei had retreated up to the hill.

Jiang Wei went onto the foot of the hill and challenged, but no one came out to accept. The soldiers of Shu began to shout abuse, and kept it up till late in the day, but they failed to provoke a fight. As the army of Shu began to retire, the Wei drums beat furiously, yet no one appeared. Jiang Wei turned about to ascend the hill, but its defenders prevented that by stones thrown from above.

He hung on till the third watch, when he tried again. But he failed. Thereupon, he went down the hill and halted, bidding his soldiers build a barricade of wood and boulders. The troops of Wei came on again, and the Shu troops scrambled to run to the old camp.

Next day, Jiang Wei brought up many transport wagons and placed them on the slope as the nucleus of a camp. But in the night, a number of Wei troops came down with torches and set fire to them. A fight ensued, which lasted till dawn.

Seeing that a camp could not be made there, Jiang Wei retired to consider new plans with Xiahou Ba.

“Since we cannot take Nanan, our next best plan is to try for Shanggui, which is the storehouse of Nanan.”

Leaving Xiahou Ba on the hill, Jiang Wei led a force of veteran soldiers and bold officers along the road toward Shanggui. They marched all night, and dawn found them in a deep valley, which the guides said was Block Valley.

“That sounds too much like ‘Cut-off Valley,’” said Jiang Wei. “And if a force held the mouth, we should be in sorry straits.”

While hesitating whether to advance farther or not, the leading troops came back to say, “We have seen a cloud of dust beyond the hills, which seems to indicate a body of soldiers in hiding.”

So the order was given to retire. At that moment the armies under Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong came out and attacked. Jiang Wei, alternately fighting and retreating, tried to get away. Then Deng Ai himself appeared, and the Shu army had enemies on three sides. They were in grave danger, but Xiahou Ba came to their rescue, and so Jiang Wei escaped.

Jiang Wei proposed to return to Qishan, but Xiahou Ba said, "We cannot go thither, for Chen Tai has destroyed the force under Bao Su, and he himself was killed. All that was left of that army has gone back into Hanzhong."

It was no longer a question of taking the Dongting road. Jiang Wei sought out byroads to march along. Deng Ai came in pursuit, and as he pressed hard on the rear, Jiang Wei sent the others on ahead while he covered the retreat.

Soon Chen Tai came out from the hills, and Jiang Wei was surrounded by a shouting body of the enemy. He fought all directions, but could not clear the way. He and his horse were very weary when Zhang Ni, who had heard of his straits, came to his rescue with a body of cavalry. Zhang Ni cut his way in, and Jiang Wei immediately broke the siege and got out. Zhang Ni saved his general, but lost his own life in the melee. Finally, Jiang Wei got back into Hanzhong.

From Hanzhong, the death of Zhang Ni in battle was reported to the Latter Ruler, who bestowed suitable honors upon his family.

The Shu people blamed Jiang Wei for the serious loss of life of their relatives in the military operations that had just failed, and Jiang Wei, following the precedent in Jieting of the late Lord of Wuxiang, asked that he himself should be degraded in rank, retaining, however, the command. He was put back to General of the Rear Army.

The country being now cleared of the enemy, Chen Tai and Deng Ai prepared a banquet in honor of victory and gave rewards to the soldiers who had fought. Chen Tai sent a memorial to the capital upon the services of

Deng Ai, and a special commission of Sima Zhao brought Deng Ai higher rank; the title of lordship was given to his son, Deng Zhong.

At this time the style of the reign in Wei was changed from Right Origin, the third year, to Gentle Dew Era, the first year (AD 256). Sima Zhao commanded all the military forces and made himself the empire's Commander-in-Chief. He assumed great pomp, and whenever he moved outside his palace, he was escorted by three thousand mail-clad guards, beside squadrons of cavalry. All power lay in his hands, and he decided all questions so that the court was rather in his palace than in that of the Emperor.

Plans for taking the final step constantly occupied his thoughts. The question of mounting the throne was openly mooted by Jia Chong, a confidant, who was a son of Commander Jia Kui. Jia Chong was holding the High Counselor office in the Prime Minister's palace.

Jia Chong said, "Sir, all real authority is in your hands, and the country is not tranquil. The only remedy is for you to become actual ruler, and you should find out who are your supporters."

Sima Zhao replied, "This has been in my thoughts a long time. You might be my emissary to the east to find out the feeling there. You can pretend you go to thank the soldiers who took part in the late campaign. That would be a good pretext."

Accordingly, Jia Chong traveled into the South of River Huai, where he saw Zhuge Dan, General Who Guards the East. This officer was from Nanyang and a cousin of the late Lord of Wuxiang, Zhuge Liang. Zhuge Dan had gone to Wei for employment, but had received no significant office while Zhuge Liang was the Prime minister of Shu. After Zhuge Liang's death, Zhuge Dan's promotion was rapid. He was now Lord of Gaoping and Commander of the South and East of River Huai.

Jia Chong went to Zhuge Dan to ask him to convey to the army the appreciation of the soldiers' services. Jia Chong was received courteously, and at a banquet, when host and guest were both mellow with wine, Jia Chong set himself to discover Zhuge Dan's feelings.

Jia Chong said, "Lately in Luoyang, there has been much talk of the weakness and lack of ability of the Emperor and his unfitness to rule. Now General Sima Zhao comes of a family noted for state service for three generations. His own services and virtues are high as the heavens, and he is the man best fitted to take the rulership of Wei. Is this not your opinion?"

But Zhuge Dan did not favor the suggestion. On the contrary, he broke out angrily, "You are a son of Jia Kui of Yuzhou, and your family have received the bounty of Wei. Yet you dare speak of rebellion!"

Jia Chong said, "I only repeat what people have said."

Zhuce Dan said, "If the state is in difficulty, then one ought to stand up for it even to the death!"

Jia Chong said no more. He soon returned and told Sima Zhao what had been said.

"The rat!" cried Sima Zhao, angrily.

"Zhuge Dan is exceedingly popular there in the South of River Huai; if he is left too long, he will do harm."

Sima Zhao began to take measures. He wrote privately to Yue Chen, Imperial Protector of Yangzhou, and sent a messenger to Zhuge Dan with an edict making him Minister of Works. This meant that Zhuge Dan had to come to the capital.

But Zhuge Dan knew that Jia Chong had done him mischief, and he interrogated the messenger, who told him that Yue Chen knew all about the matter.

“How does he know?”

“General Sima Zhao sent him a private letter.”

The messenger was condemned to death. Then Zhuge Dan placed himself at the head of his personal guard and marched to Yangzhou. The city gates were closed and the drawbridge raised. He summoned the gate, but no one answered.

“How dare this fellow Yue Chen treat me thus?” cried Zhuge Dan.

He ordered his troops to force the gate. Ten of his bold generals dismounted, crossed the moat, and climbed the ramparts, where they slew all who opposed them, and opened the gate. The others entered, set fire to the houses, and began to fight their way toward the state residence.

The Imperial Protector sought refuge in a tower, but Zhuge Dan made his way up and reproached his enemy, crying, “Your father, Yue Jin, enjoyed the bounty of Wei. Yet you have not sought to repay the kindness of the Ruling House, but you want to help the rebel Sima Zhao!”

Before Yue Chen was able to answer, Zhuge Dan slew him. Then he sent to Luoyang a memorial detailing Sima Yi’s many faults, and made preparations for war. He called up all the militia of the South and East of River Huai, to the total of one hundred thousand, and took over the forty thousand troops who had surrendered on the fall of Yue Chen and gathered supplies. He also sent Adviser Wu Gang to Wu for aid, offering his son Zhuge Jing as a hostage for his good faith.

By this time, Sun Jun had died and his brother, Sun Chen, was Prime Minister. Sun Chen was a man of cruel and violent temper and had put many officers to death on his way to power—among them were Grand Commander Teng Yin, General Lu Ju, and Minister Wang Chun. The Ruler of Wu, Sun Liang, although intelligent, was helpless in his hands.

The messenger, Wu Gang, conducted Zhuge Jing to the residence of Sun Chen in Shidou, who asked what he had come for.

Wu Gang explained, “Zhuge Dan is a cousin of the Lord of Wuxiang in Shu. Zhuge Dan had been in service of Wei; seeing Sima Zhao depose his prince and oppress good people, he wants to punish the tyrant. But his force is not enough, and he asks for your help. To show his sincerity, he sends his son Zhuge Jing as a token of good faith.”

Wu Gang’s request was received favorably, and Sun Chen sent seventy thousand troops with a full complement of officers—Quan Yi and Quan Duan as Commanders, Yu Quan as Rear Guard, Tang Zi and Zhu Yi as Leaders of the Van, Wen Qin as Military Guide. They marched in three directions to attack Wei.

Wu Gang returned to Shouchun to report success. Zhuge Dan thought all was going well and prepared the army for a general attack.

In Luoyang, Zhuge Dan’s memorial angered Sima Zhao, who wished to set out to avenge the attack at once, but Jia Chong preached caution.

“My lord, you derived your power from your father and brother, and people have not had time to discover your own virtue. If you leave the court and there be a revulsion of feeling against you, you will lose all. Rather, request the Empress Dowager and the Son of Heaven to go with you in the expedition, and nothing is to be feared,” said Jia Chong.

“That is an excellent plan.”

Sima Zhao went into the Palace and proposed it to Her Majesty, saying, “Zhuge Dan is in revolt, and my colleagues and I intend to punish

him. I beg that you will accompany the expedition as the late Emperor would have done.”

The Empress was afraid but dared not refuse, and the next day was requested to set out with the Ruler of Wei, Cao Mao.

Cao Mao said, “General, you command all the armies and dispose them as you will. Why do you ask me to go?”

Sima Zhao replied, “Your Majesty is wrong to hesitate. Your ancestors traveled over the empire and wished to unite the whole under one ruler. Wherever there was a worthy opponent, they went to face him. Your Majesty should follow their example and sweep the land clean. Why fear?”

Cao Mao, fearing his minister’s terrible power, consented, and an edict was issued for the commands to mobilize two hundred sixty thousand troops of two capitals. Wang Ji, General Who Corrects the South, was in command of the van, and Chen Qian, General Who Pacifies the East, was second in command of the van. Shi Bao, Army Inspector, and Zhou Cai, Imperial Protector of Yangzhou, led the Imperial Escort. The army moved into the South of River Huai like a great flood.

Zhu Yi, the Leader of the Van of Wu, encountered them, and both sides drew up for battle. Zhu Yi rode out and took the challenge, but was overcome by Wang Ji in the third bout and he fled. Tang Zi also rode out, but was also beaten in the third encounter by Wang Ji. Then Wang Ji ordered a full attack. The troops of Wu were broken and retired fifteen miles and camped. Thence, they sent tidings of their ill-success to Shouchun.

Zhuge Dan in Shouchun led out his bold and strong soldiers to join forces with Wen Qin and his two sons, Wen Yang and Wen Hu. Then they set out against Sima Zhao.

Now here is a check to the armies of Wu,
And Wei's gallant men advance.

The next chapter will tell how went victory.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXV

CHAPTER 112

RESCUING SHOUCHUN, YU QUAN DIES NOBLY; ATTACKING THE GREAT WALL, JIANG WEI MOBILIZES.

Hearing of this threatened attack, Sima Zhao sought advice from two of his officers, High Counselor Pei Xiu and Palace Assistant Zhong Hui.

Zhong Hui said, "The Wu army is helping our enemies for the sake of profit, and hence we can seduce them with an offer of greater profit."

Sima Zhao agreed with this opinion and resolved accordingly. As part of his plan, he sent Shi Bao and Zhou Cai to lay ambushes in different places near Shouchun.

As ordered by Sima Zhao, Wang Ji and Chen Qian commanded an army of veterans on the rear, Cheng Zu led thirty thousand troops out to bring on a battle, while Chen Jun got together many wagons, herds of oxen, droves of horses, donkeys and mules, and heaps of military supplies, all of which he crowded together in the midst of the army. This stuff was meant to be abandoned as soon as the fight began so that the enemy might be tempted to plunder.

That day, Zhuge Dan led the center army, while Zhu Yi and Wen Qin commanded the left and right armies. The armies being drawn up, Zhuge Dan looked across at his opponents and saw that the center of the Wei army was taken up by a disorderly mass of transport. Presently, he led on his troops to attack, and Cheng Zu, as bidden to do, gave way and fled, leaving a large amount of spoil. When the soldiers of Wu saw such huge quantities

of booty, theirs for the taking, they lost all desire to fight and scattered to gather the spoil.

While thus occupied, suddenly a bomb exploded and, from left and right, down came Shi Bao and Zhou Cai and the army of Wei upon the spoilers. Zhuge Dan attempted to draw off, but other forces under Wang Ji and Chen Qian appeared, and he was heavily smitten. Then came on Sima Zhao with his army, and Zhuge Dan fled to Shouchun, where he entered and shut the gates. The army of Wei set down to the siege of the city, and the army of Wu retired into camp at Anfeng. The Ruler of Wei, Cao Mao, was lodging at this time in Xiangcheng.

Then said Zhong Hui, “Zhuge Dan has been worsted, but the city wherein he has taken refuge is well supplied, and his allies, the troops of Wu, are not distant. His position is strong. Our soldiers are besieging the city all round, which means that those within will hold out for a long time, or they will make a desperate sortie. Their allies also may fall upon us at the same time, and it would go hard for us. Therefore, I advise that the attack be made only on three sides, leaving the south gate open for them if they wish to flee. If they flee, we can fall on the fugitives. The troops of Wu cannot have supplies for very long. If we sent some light cavalry round by their rear, we might stay their fighting power without a battle.”

“You are my Zhang Liang,” said Sima Zhao, stroking the back of his adviser. “Your advice is excellent!”

So Wang Ji, who was on the south of the city, was ordered to withdraw.

But in the Wu camp at Anfeng was much sadness at the want of success.

Sun Chen said to General Zhu Yi, “If we cannot succor Shouchun, how can we hope to overrun the Middle Land? Now and here, you have to win a victory or die, for another defeat will mean death.”

Zhu Yi went back to his camp and talked with Yu Quan.

Yu Quan said, "The south gate of Shouchun is free, and I will lead therein some of our troops to help Zhuge Dan. Then, you challenge the Wei army on one side, and we will come out from the city and attack on the other side."

Zhu Yi thought the plan good, and Quan Yi, Quan Duan, and Wen Qin were willing to go into the city and share in the attack. They were allowed to march in without hindrance, as the Wei generals had no orders to stop them.

When this was reported to Sima Zhao, he said, "This is a plan to defeat our army by making a front and rear attack."

So he called Wang Ji and Chen Qian and told them to take five thousand troops to keep the road along which Zhu Yi would come and strike him in rear.

Zhu Yi was advancing toward the city when he heard a shouting in the rear, and soon the attack began from two sides by Wang Ji and Chen Qian. His army was worsted and returned to Anfeng.

When Sun Chen heard of this new defeat, he was very angry.

"What is the use of leaders who always lose?" cried he.

He sentenced Zhu Yi to death, and upbraided Quan Wei, son of Quan Duan, and said, "If you do not drive off this army of Wei, let me never again see your face, nor that of your father."

Then Sun Chen returned to Capital Jianye.

When this was known in the Wei camp, Zhong Hui said to his chief, "Now the city of Shouchun may be attacked, for Sun Chen has gone away, and there is no hope of succor for the besieged."

A vigorous assault began. Quan Wei tried to cut his way through and get into the city. But when he saw Shouchun quite surrounded by the enemy and no hope of success, he gave in and went over to Sima Zhao, by whom he was well-received and given the rank of General.

Deeply affected by this kindness, Quan Wei wrote to his father, Quan Duan, and uncle, Quan Yi, advising them to follow his example. He tied the letter to an arrow and shot it over the walls. Quan Yi found the letter, and he and Quan Duan, with their several thousand troops, came out and yielded.

Within the city, Zhuge Dan was very sad.

Two advisers, Jiang Ban and Jiao Yi, came to him and said, "The food in the city is short, and the soldiers are many; this can not last long. General, you should let the Wu troops go out and make a decisive fight with the Wei army."

Zhuge Dan turned on them angrily.

"Why do you tell me to fight when I am set on holding out to the very last? If you say that again, you shall die as traitors!"

"He is lost!" said they, going away. "We can do no other than surrender or we shall die too."

That night Jiang Ban and Jiao Yi slipped over the wall and surrendered. Both were given employment.

Of those left in the city, some were for fighting, but no one dared say so.

Meanwhile, Zhuge Dan saw the Wei troops build earth walls to anticipate the expected floods of the River Huai. This flood had been the

only hope of Zhuge Dan, who had trusted to be able to smite the besiegers when it came to destroy the earth wall. However, that autumn was dry, and the river did not swell.

Within the besieged city, the food diminished rapidly, and soon starvation stared them in the face. Wen Qin and his sons were defending the citadel, and they saw their soldiers sinking one by one for lack of food till the sight became unbearable.

Wen Qin went to Zhuge Dan with a proposal, saying, "The northern troops should be sent away in order to save food."

His suggestion called forth an outburst of fierce wrath from Zhuge Dan. "Do you want to kill me, that you propose to send the northern soldiers away?"

Wen Qin suffered death. His two sons, Wen Yang and Wen Hu, ran amok with rage. Armed with short swords, they attacked all they met and slew many scores in their desperate anger. The fight over, they dropped down the wall and deserted to the Wei camp.

However, Sima Zhao had not forgotten that Wen Yang had defied and held at bay his whole army once. At first, Sima Zhao thought to put Wen Yang to death, but Zhong Hui interposed.

"The real offender was his father, Wen Qin," said Zhong Hui, "but he is dead, and these two come to you in desperation. If you slay those who surrender, you will strengthen the obstinacy of those who remain in the city."

There was reason in this, and so their submission was accepted. They were led to Sima Zhao's tent, and he soothed them with kind words and gave them gifts and lordships, and made them Generals.

After expressing their gratitude, they rode about the city on the horses he had given them, shouting, "We have received great kindness at the hands of Sima Zhao, who not only has pardoned us but given us gifts. Why do you not all yield?"

When their companions heard this, they said one to another. "This Wen Yang was an enemy, and yet he has been well-received. How much more may we expect generous treatment?"

The desire to surrender possessed them all. When Zhuge Dan heard it, he was incensed and went round the posts night and day, on the watch for any who seemed inclined to go. He put many to death in these efforts to retain his authority.

Zhong Hui heard how things were going in the city and went in to Sima Zhao to say the moment to attack had come. Sima Zhao was only too pleased. He stimulated his troops, and they flocked to the ramparts and assaulted vigorously. Then, the commander of the north gate, Zeng Xuan, treacherously opened the gate and let in the Wei soldiers.

When Zhuge Dan heard that the enemy were in the city, he called his guards and tried to escape. He took his way along the smaller streets to the gate, but on the drawbridge he met Hu Fen, who cut him down. His followers were made prisoners.

Wang Ji fought his way to the west gate, where he fell in with the Wu general, Yu Quan.

"Why do you not yield?" shouted Wang Ji.

"Where is the principle for yielding when I have my orders to rescue the city and so far have not succeeded?" Throwing off his helmet, he cried, "The happiest death a man can die is on the battlefield!"

Whirling his sword about, Yu Quan dashed among his enemies and fought till he fell under many wounds.



Many were they who yielded at Shouchun,
Bowling their heads in the dust before Sima Zhao.
Wu had produced its heroes,
Yet none were faithful to the death like Yu Quan.



When Sima Zhao entered the city, he put to death the whole family of Zhuge Dan. Some of his guards fell into the hands of Sima Zhao alive, and he offered them their lives if they would yield.

They all refused, saying, “We would rather share the fate of our leader.”

They were sent out of the city to be beheaded, but orders were given to offer each one his life at the last moment. Thus, before a person was about to receive the fatal blow, that one was asked to yield. Not one accepted, and they all died. In admiration for their fortitude, they were honorably interred by order of Sima Zhao.



The loyal servant flees not in the day of disaster;
Such were they who followed Zhuge Dan to the
shades.

Ever and again begins the Song of Life’s Brevity.

Faithful unto death were they, even as Tian Heng's people.



As has been said, many of the troops of Wu surrendered.

Then said Pei Xiu, "The parents and children of these soldiers are living all over River Huai. If you spare them and they return home, they will foment rebellion by and by. The best way is to bury them."

But Zhong Hui said, "No. When the ancients made war, their policy was to maintain the state as a whole, and so they only put to death the originators of trouble. It would be inhumane to slay all. Rather, let them return home as witnesses to your liberal policy."

"That is better advice," said Sima Zhao. So the soldiers of Wu were released and allowed to return home.

Tang Zi dared not return to his own place in Wu for fear of the cruel Sun Chen, so he went over to Wei, taking his company with him. He was well received, and his people were employed over the counties of the three rivers.

The country about River Huai being now quiet, Sima Zhao decided to march homeward.

Just then, the news came: "Jiang Wei, the Shu General, is attacking the Great Wall and interfering with the supplies."

And so, a council was called to discuss this matter.



At this time in Shu, the reign style was changed from Long Enjoyment, the twentieth year, to Wonderful Sight, the first year (AD 258). In Hanzhong, Jiang Wei had recruited two generals, Fu Qian and Jiang Shu, both of whom he loved greatly, and set them to train the army, horse and foot.

Then came the news: “Zhuge Dan has set out to destroy Sima Zhao, Sun Chen of Wu has supported him with a large army, and Sima Zhao has led the army himself, bringing with him the Empress Dowager and the Ruler of Wei.”

Jiang Wei said, “The great opportunity has come at last!” So he asked the Latter Ruler’s authority to make another expedition.

But Minister Qiao Zhou heard this with grief, for internal affairs were not well. Said he, “The court is sunk in dissipation, and the Emperor’s confidence is given to that eunuch, Huang Hao. State affairs are neglected for pleasure, which is the Emperor’s sole aim. Jiang Wei has led many expeditions and wasted the lives of many soldiers, so that the state is falling.”

Qiao Zhou then wrote an essay on “Enemy Kingdoms,” which he sent to Jiang Wei.

“When one asks by what means the weak overcame the strong in past times, the answer is that those responsible for the strong state made no struggle against general laxity, while those in power in a weak state took careful steps for improvement. Confusion followed upon laxity and efficiency grew out of diligence, as is the universal rule. King Wen of Zhou devoted himself to the welfare of his people, and with a small number achieved great results; Goujian sympathized with all and, with a weak force, overcame a powerful opponent. These were their methods.

“One may recall that in the past, Chu was strong and Han weak when the empire was divided by agreement at the Grand Canal. Then, seeing that his people were satisfied and settled in their minds, Zhang Liang went in pursuit of Xiang Yu and destroyed him.

“But is it necessary to act like King Wen and Goujian? Listen to the reply. In the days of Shang and Zhou, when imperial ranks had long existed and the relations between prince and minister were firmly established, even such as the Founder of the Hans could not have carved his way to a throne. But when the dynasty of Qin had suppressed the feudal nobles and set up mere representatives of its own power, and the people were weak and enslaved, the empire was rived asunder, and there succeeded a time of contention, when every bold soul strove with his neighbor.

“But we are now in other times. Since there is not the state of confusion that waited on the end of Qin, but a state of things more nearly like that of the period of the Warring States, in which six kingdoms contended for the mastery, therefore one may play the part of King Wen. If one would found a dynasty, then must that one wait upon time and favorable destiny. With these in his favor, the consummation will follow forthwith, as the armies of Kings Tang and Wu fought but one battle. Therefore, have real compassion for the people and wait on opportunity. If wars are constant, and a mishap come, even the wisest will be unable to show the way of safety.”

“An effusion from the pen of a rotten pedant!” cried Jiang Wei wrathfully as he finished reading, and he dashed the essay on the ground in contempt.

The protest was disregarded, and the army marched.

“In your opinion where should we begin?” asked he of Fu Qian.

Fu Qian replied, “The great storehouse of Wei is at the Great Wall, and we ought to burn their grain and forage. Let us go out by the Luo Valley and cross the Shen Ridge. After the capture of the Great Wall, we can go on to Qinchuan, and the conquest of the Middle Land will be near.”

“What you say just fits in with my secret plans,” replied Jiang Wei.

So the army marched to the Luo Valley and crossed the Shen Ridge.

The Commander of the Great Wall was Sima Wang, a cousin of Sima Zhao. Huge stores of grain were in the city, but its defenses were weak. So when Sima Wang heard of the approach of the Shu army, he and his two leaders, Wang Zhen and Li Peng, made a camp seven miles from the walls to keep any attack at a distance.

When the enemy came up, Sima Wang and his two generals went forth from the ranks to meet them.

Jiang Wei stood in the front of his army and said, “Sima Zhao has forced his prince to go with him to war, which plainly indicates that he intends to emulate the deeds of Li Jue and Guo Si. My government has commanded me to punish this fault. Wherefore I say to you, yield at once. For if you persist in the way of error, you and yours shall all be put to death!”

Sima Wang shouted back, “You and yours are wholly strangers to any feeling of rectitude. You have repeatedly invaded a superior state’s territory. If you do not at once retire, I will see to it that not even a breastplate returns!”

With these words, General Wang Zhen rode out, his spear set ready to thrust. From the host of Shu came Fu Qian to take the challenge, and the two champions engaged. After a few encounters, Fu Qian tempted his opponent by feigning weakness. Wang Zhen thrust at the opening he gave. Fu Qian evaded the blow, snatched Wang Zhen out of the saddle, and bore him off.

Seeing this, his colleague, Li Peng whirled up his sword and went pounding down toward the captor. Fu Qian went, but slowly, thus luring Li Peng into rash pursuit. When Li Peng was near enough, Fu Qian dashed his prisoner with all his strength to the earth, took a firm grip on his four-edged brand, and smote Li Peng full in the face. The blow knocked out an eye, and Li Peng fell dead. Wang Zhen had been already killed by the Shu troops as he lay on the ground. Both generals being dead, the troops of Wei fled into the city and barred the gates.

Jiang Wei gave orders for the army to rest that night and take the city on the morrow with all vigor.

Next day, at dawn, the assault began. The soldiers, fresh from their rest, vied with each other who should be first on the wall. They shot over the ramparts fire-arrows and firebombs and burned all the buildings on the wall. They next brought up brushwood and piled it against the rampart and set it alight, so that the flames rose high.

When the city seemed about to fall, the defenders set up a howling and a lamentation that could be heard all around. But suddenly, a great rolling of drums diverted the attention of the assailants from the city, and they turned their faces to see a great host of Wei soldiers marching up in all the glory of waving banners. Jiang Wei faced about to meet this attack and took his place beneath the great standard.

Presently, Jiang Wei made out a youthful-looking leader riding in advance with his spear ready to thrust. He looked scarcely more than twenty years of age, his face was smooth as if powdered, and his lips were crimson. But from them came fierce words.

“Do you recognize General Deng?” cried he.

So this is Deng Ai, thought Jiang Wei.

Thereupon, Jiang Wei set his spear and rode out. Both were adepts in arms, and neither gave the other an opening, so that at the end of near half-a-hundred bouts, neither could claim advantage. The youth wielded his spear with perfect skill.

If I cannot gain the advantage by some ruse, how shall I win? thought Jiang Wei.

So he turned aside his steed and dashed along a certain road that led to the hills. The youth followed. Presently, Jiang Wei slung his spear, laid hands upon his bow, chose with care a feathered arrow, and laid it on the string. But the youth was quick of eye, and as the bowstring sang, he bent his head over the saddle, and the arrow passed harmlessly by.

The next time Jiang Wei turned, he saw his pursuer close upon him, and already the spear was threatening his life. But as the youth thrust, Jiang Wei evaded the blow and caught the shaft under his arm. Thus deprived of his weapon, the young man made for his own array.

“What a pity! What a great pity!” cried Jiang Wei, turning to pursue.

He followed the young general close up to the standard.

But just as he came near, a warrior came to the front, shouting, “Jiang Wei, you fool, do not pursue my son when I, Deng Ai, am here!”

Jiang Wei was taken aback; so he had only been contending with Deng Zhong, the son of his real opponent. Although he was astonished at the skill

and vigor of the youth, he now knew that a heavier task lay before him and feared lest his steed was then too far spent for the contest.

So he said to Deng Ai, "Seeing things are so, let us both hold off our troops till the morrow, when we will fight."

Deng Ai, glancing around, saw that the place was ill-suited for him, so he agreed to wait, saying, "Let us lead off our armies then, and whoever shall take any secret advantage is a base fellow."

Both sides retired into camp, Deng Ai on the bank of River Wei, and Jiang Wei on the hills.

Deng Ai saw that the army of Shu had the advantage of position, so he wrote off at once to Sima Wang:

"General, we should not give battle, but wait for reinforcements. Meanwhile, the soldiers of Shu will be consuming their supply of grain, and we will attack on three sides when they begin to be hungry. I send my son Deng Zhong to you for further help in the defense of the city."

Jiang Wei sent a messenger to the Wei camp to deliver a letter of battle, the contest to take place the next day. Deng Ai openly accepted. But when morning came and Jiang Wei had arrayed his troops, his enemy had not appeared on the field. Nor was there any sign of giving battle, no display of flags or rolling of drums all day.

At nightfall, the army of Shu returned to camp, and Jiang Wei sent a letter reproaching his opponent with his failure to keep his word.

Deng Ai treated the bearer of the letter with great courtesy and explained, saying, "I have been indisposed today but will certainly fight on the morrow."

But the next day passed, also, without any move on the part of Wei; the same thing went on for five days.

Then, said Fu Qian to his chief, "There is some knavery afoot, and we must be on our guard."

"They must be waiting for reinforcements from Within the Passes that they may attack on three sides," said Jiang Wei. "But now will I send into Wu and get Sun Chen to strike at the same time as I."

Just then, scouts came to give the news of the rout of the army of Wu: "Sima Zhao has subjugated Shouchun and killed Zhuge Dan. Many in the Wu army have gone over to Wei. Sima Zhao has gone to Luoyang and is planning to march an army to attack the Great Wall."

"So our attack on Wei is but a sham!" said Jiang Wei, bitterly. "It is only a picture of a cake."

Four times he missed! He hailed
The fifth occasion joyfully, and failed.

The next chapter will tell the story of the retreat.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXV

CHAPTER 113

DING FENG MAKES A PLAN TO SLAY SUN CHEN; JIANG WEI ARRAYS A
BATTLE TO DEFEAT DENG AI.

Fearing lest reinforcements would strengthen his enemy beyond his own power of resistance, Jiang Wei decided to retreat while he could. He sent all his stores and baggage away first with the footsoldiers, and kept the cavalry to cover the retirement.

The spies reported his movements to Deng Ai, who said, "He has gone because he knew that the main army would soon be upon him. Let him go, and do not follow. If we pursue, he will play upon us some evil trick."

Scouts were sent to keep in touch with the retreating army, and when they returned, they reported that preparations of dry wood and straw had been made in the Luo Valley to check any pursuit with fire.

The officers praised the prescience of Deng Ai, "General, your calculation is superhuman!"

When Deng Ai reported these matters to the capital, Sima Zhao was very pleased and confer more rewards.

The Prime Minister of Wu, Sun Chen, was greatly angered by the desertion of so many of his soldiers and officers to Wei, and avenged himself by putting their families to death. The Ruler of Wu, Sun Liang, disapproved of these acts of cruelty, but he was powerless.

The young Emperor was of an ingenious turn of mind. One day, he went to the West Park to eat of the newly ripened plums. He bade one of the eunuchs bring some honey. It was brought, but there were mouse droppings in it. The Ruler of Wu called the storekeeper and blamed him for carelessness.

The storekeeper said, "We are very careful to keep the stores in good order, and the honey cannot not possibly have been fouled in the storehouse."

"Has anyone asked you for honey lately?" asked the Ruler of Wu.

"One of the eunuchs asked for some a few days ago. I refused him."

The Ruler of Wu called the named eunuch and said, "You defiled the honey out of spite."

The man denied it.

"It is very easy to tell," said the Ruler of Wu. "If the dirt has been lying in the honey for some time, it will be wet all through."

Then the Ruler of Wu ordered them to cut one of the lumps, and it was quite dry inside. The eunuch then confessed.

This shows the Ruler of Wu was quick-witted. But clever as he was, he could not control his Prime Minister, whose relatives were in command of all the garrisons and armies so that he was unassailable. His four brothers all had high offices: Sun Ju was General Who Terrifies Distant Regions and Commander of Imperial Guards; Sun En, General Who Shows Prowess; Sun Gan, Imperial Commander; and Sun Kan, Commander of Changshui.

One day, the Ruler of Wu, musing over his sorrows and feeling very miserable, began to weep. The officer in charge of the eunuchs, who was an Imperial Brother-in-Law, stood by.

“Sun Chen holds all real power and does as he wishes, while I am despised,” said the Ruler of Wu. “Something must be done.”

Quan Ji said, “I would think no sacrifice too great if Your Majesty would make use of me.”

“If you could muster the Palace guards and help General Liu Cheng to keep the gates, I would go and murder that ruffian. But you must not let anyone know, for if you tell your noble mother, who is a sister of Sun Chen, she will tell her brother, and that would be very serious for me.”

“Will Your Majesty give me a command that I may have authority to act when the time comes?” said Quan Ji. “At the critical moment, I could show the edict and hold back Sun Chen’s supporters.”

The command was given, and Quan Ji went home. But he could not keep his secret, and confided the plan to his father, Quan Shang.

His father told his wife, “Sun Chen will be got rid of in three days.”

“Oh, he deserves that,” said she.

Although she seemed to approve with her tongue, she sent a secret messenger with a letter to the proposed victim.

That same night. Sun Chen called in his four leader brothers, and the Palace was surrounded. The conspirators were seized, with Liu Cheng and Quan Shang and all their families.

About dawn, the Ruler of Wu was disturbed by a commotion at the gates, and a servant told him, “Sun Chen, with his army, has surrounded the Inner Palace!”

Sun Liang knew that he had been betrayed. He turned on Empress Quan, who was of the Quan house, and reproached her. “Your father and brother have upset all my plans!”

Drawing his sword, he was dashing out when his consort and her people clung to his clothing and held him back.

After putting to death Liu Cheng's and Quan Shang's parties, Sun Chen assembled the officers in the court and addressed them thus: "The Emperor is vicious and weak, depraved and foolish and unfit for his high office. Wherefore, he must be deposed. Any of you who oppose will be punished as for conspiracy."

"We shall obey your command, O General!" said the court officers out of fear.

Only one of those present dared to say a word of protest. It was Chair of the Secretariat Huan Yi, who said, "How dare you utter such words? Our Emperor is very intelligent, and I will not support you. I would rather die!"

Sun Chen wrathfully drew his sword and slew Huan Yi.

Then Sun Chen went into the Palace and said to Sun Liang, "O unrighteous and unenlightened Highness, your death would be the only fitting reparation to make to the empire, but out of consideration for your ancestors, you are only deposed and degraded to princely rank as Prince of Kuaiji. I will select a worthy successor."

Secretary Li Zong was ordered to bring in the royal seal, which was delivered to Deng Cheng. The deposed ruler retired, weeping.



The sage example of the wise Yi Yin
Perverted now to traitor's use we see;
And Huo Guang's faithful services are made
A cloak to cover vilest treachery.
Even able princes are but toys of fate,

And need our pity, fallen from high estate.



Sun Chen then sent two ministers of the court, Royal Clan Recorder Sun Kai and Secretary Dong Cao, went as envoys to Hulin to request Sun Xiu, Prince of Langye, the sixth son of Sun Quan, to ascend the throne.

The Emperor-elect had had some premonition of the high honor to which he was now called, for in a dream he saw he ascended into the skies seated on a dragon. Only the dragon seemed to have no tail. He woke up in a fright, and the next day brought the imperial envoys, Sun Kai and Dong Cao.

Sun Xiu set out. At Que, his carriage was stopped by a venerable, old man who claimed to be Gan Xiu and offered felicitations.

“Your Majesty should move faster, for things may change swiftly,” said the aged one.

Sun Xiu thanked the old man.

At Busai Pavilion awaited Sun En with a chariot, but Sun Xiu’s modesty would not allow him to mount it. He remained in his own simple carriage and therein traveled to the Palace. Officials lined the road to salute him, and he dismounted to return their salutations. Then Sun Chen stood forth and bade them take the newly-elected Emperor by the arm and lead him into the Great Hall, where, after thrice refusing the honor, he at last took his seat in the dragon throne and received the jade seal passed from one ruler to another.

When all the officers had made obeisance, there were the usual amnesties, promotions, and honors, and Eternal Tranquility, the first year (AD 258), was the name of the new reign. Sun Chen was confirmed as

Prime Minister, with the Imperial Protectorship of Jingzhou. Moreover, Sun Hao, the son of his elder brother, was created Lord of Wucheng.

Sun Chen, with five persons in his family holding lordships and the whole army under their command, was immensely powerful, able to set up and pull down at will. The new Ruler of Wu, Sun Xiu, secretly feared him, and although outwardly he showed Sun Chen great favor, he kept careful watch over Sun Chen, whose arrogance knew no bounds.

In the winter, Sun Chen sent into the Palace presents of oxen and wine as birthday gifts. The Ruler of Wu declined them. Sun Chen was very annoyed and took the presents to Zhang Bu's residence, where they two dined together. Zhang Bu was the General of the Left Army.

When warmed with wine, Sun Chen said, "When I deposed the present Prince of Kuaiji, many people urged me to take the throne myself. But I acted magnanimously and set up this present Emperor. Now I suffer the mortification of seeing my presents rejected. You will see what will come of this slight."

Zhang Bu showed sympathy, but the next day, he secretly told the Ruler of Wu, and Sun Xiu's fears increased so that he could not rest. Shortly after this, Sun Chen sent a large body of troops under the command of Minister Meng Zong into camp at Wuchang, and Sun Chen armed them from the state arsenals.

Whereupon, General Wei Miao and Imperial Guard Shi Shuo secretly memorialized the Ruler of Wu: "Sun Chen has moved the troops outside and provided them with state arms. This action points to rebellion."

Sun Xiu was shocked, and called in Zhang Bu to consult, and he said, "The Veteran General Ding Feng is an able and trustworthy officer. He should be consulted."

So Ding Feng was called and taken into the Emperor's confidence.

"Have no anxiety," said Ding Feng. "I will find some way of ridding the state of this evil."

"What do you propose?"

"When the winter court is held, and all the officers are assembled, spread a great banquet and invite Sun Chen. I shall be ready to act."

Wei Miao and Shi Shuo were taken into the plot and were to do what was possible outside the Palace, and Zhang Bu saw to arrangements within.

One night, a heavy storm came on to blow which tore up great trees by the roots. However, by daylight it had abated, and that morning, an Emperor's messenger arrived bearing an invitation to a banquet in the Palace. Sun Chen rose from his couch, and, as he did so, fell flat on the ground as though he had been pushed from behind. This accident troubled him, and he felt apprehensive, so he called half a score of his trusty guards to act as his escort to the Palace.

As he was leaving home, his family besought him not to go out, saying, "The storm last night and the fall this morning are fearful omens. You should not go to that banquet."

However, he made light of their fears and said, "My brothers are holding the army. Who will dare come near me? But if there is anything amiss, you just give a fire signal from the Prime Minister's residence."

So Sun Chen took his seat, and the carriage set out. When he reached the court, the Ruler of Wu rose from his place to welcome him, and at the table Sun Chen sat in the seat of honor. The banquet proceeded.

“There is a fire outside. What does that mean?” said a guest presently.

Sun Chen rose to go out, but the Ruler of Wu said, “There is no danger, and there are plenty of soldiers outside to take care of that.”

Just at that moment, Zhang Bu entered at the head of thirty armed guards. He rushed up the banquet chamber, shouting, “I hold a command to slay the rebel Sun Chen!”

Instantly, the Prime Minister was seized. He fell prostrate before the Ruler of Wu, knocking his head on the ground and crying, “Spare my life! Exile me to Jiaozhou, where I will do plow work.”

“Did you exile any of your victims—Teng Yin, Lu Ju, Wang Chun, and others?” said the Ruler of Wu, angrily.

The order went forth to carry out the execution, and Sun Chen was hustled out and put to death. No single person of his servants raised a hand to help him.

Then Zhang Bu read an edict: “Sun Chen is the only culprit, and no other will be questioned.”

Then, at Zhang Bu’s request, the Ruler of Wu went up on the Tower of the Five Phoenixes. Zhang Bu, Wei Miao, and Shi Shuo brought the brothers of the Prime Minister before Sun Xiu, and he condemned them to death. After this their families were slain, so that many hundreds suffered death. Not content with all these things, the tomb of Sun Jun was broken open and his corpse beheaded.

Magnificent tombs were raised to his victims—Zhuge Ke, Teng Yin, Lu Ju, Wang Chun, and others. Thus, at last loyalty was rewarded, and the banished were permitted to return home with full pardon. The conspirators were rewarded.

News of this revolution was sent into Chengdu, and the Latter Ruler sent an envoy into Wu with felicitations. In return, the Ruler of Wu sent Xue Xu as his envoy to Shu.

When Xue Xu returned, the Ruler of Wu questioned about affairs in the west, and Xue Xu said, “All affairs of state are in the hands of a certain eunuch named Huang Hao, and all the courtiers look up to him as to a father. At court, plain truth is never heard, and the countryside people look sallow and starved. The whole country appears on the verge of destruction. The birds on the roof do not know that the building is about to be burned.”

“Ah! If only Zhuge Liang the Martial Lord was still alive—how different all would be!” said Sun Xiu, with a sigh.

Letters were prepared saying that beyond doubt Sima Zhao intended usurpation, and when that came about in Wei, both Wu and Shu would be invaded. Wherefore both should be ready.

On the arrival of these letters, Jiang Wei hastened to seek permission to attempt another expedition. Consent being given, a large army marched into Hanzhong in the winter of the first year of Wonderful Sight (AD 258). Liao Hua and Zhang Yi were appointed Leaders of the Van, Wang Han and Jiang Bin as Commanders of the Left Army, and Jiang Shu and Fu Qian as Commanders of the Right Army, while Jiang Wei and Xiahou Ba led the main column.

Asked what he thought should be the first objective, Xiahou Ba replied, “There is no better fighting ground than Qishan, as the tactics of the late Prime Minister made evident, and it is the only good exit.”

So thither three armies marched, and they made three camps at the entrance to the valley.

At this time, Deng Ai had a training camp at Qishan, drilling the Longyou troops. The scouts told him, "The Shu army have pitched three camps in the valley."

He ascended a hill to see and verify their reports. He seemed pleased when he saw the enemy camp.

"They have just done as I foresaw," said Deng Ai.

Now Deng Ai had carefully considered the topography of the countryside, and so had not interfered with the Shu army when it was on the march or settling into camp. Moreover, he had excavated a subterranean road to the spot where he had thought they would halt, and their left camp had been pitched just on it. Wang Han and Jiang Bin commanded in that camp.

Deng Ai called his son Deng Zhong and Shi Zuan and sent them with ten thousand troops each to attack the left camp, one on each flank. Then he sent Zheng Lun and five hundred troops into the underground road, which opened in rear of the camp of Wang Han and Jiang Bin.

As the newly-made camp was not yet well-fortified, Wang Han and Jiang Bin exercised great care and kept their troops armed all night, watching with vigilance. So when the alarm was given, they had but to seize their weapons and go out. But as the two leaders were mounting their steeds, Deng Zhong and Shi Zuan had attacked from without, and Zheng Lun from within. Thus attacked from three sides, soon Wang Han and Jiang Bin found the position untenable and fled.

When Jiang Wei saw that his left camp had been attacked on three sides, he mounted and took his position in front of the center camp.

"Let no one move, on pain of death!" he shouted. "Stand still. When the enemy approaches, shoot!"

The right camp was ordered to stand fast. His defense was effective. A dozen times the troops of Wei came forward, only to be driven back before the arrows and bolts of the defenders. Daylight found the Shu camps still firm, and the Wei troops drew off.

“Jiang Wei has indeed learned from Zhuge Liang,” said Deng Ai. “His soldiers withstood the night attack without flinching, and the leaders took the chances of battle quite calmly. He is able.”

Next day, when Wang Han and Jiang Bin went to confess their fault, Jiang Wei said, “It was less your fault than mine, for I did not clearly recognize the nature of the terrain.”

So no penalty was inflicted. The camp was made stronger, and the subterranean passage was filled with the bodies of the slain.

A challenge to battle for the following day was sent to Deng Ai, who accepted it joyfully.

Next day, the two armies were arrayed in front of the Qishan Mountains. The troops of Shu arrayed according to the “Eight Formations” designed by Zhuge Liang, which are called Heaven, Earth, Wind, Cloud, Bird, Serpent, Dragon, and Tiger. While the maneuver was in progress, Deng Ai recognized it as the Eight Gates Formation and placed his troops accordingly.

Jiang Wei then gripped his spear and rode out, saying, “You have made a good imitation of my eight, but can you work variations?”

“You call these yours! Did you think that you alone held the secret? Since I have made it, of course I know the variations.”

Deng Ai reentered his ranks, gave the signal officers certain orders, and the eight gates were evolved in rapid succession into sixty-four gates. Then he rode to the front again.

“What of my evolution?” asked Deng Ai.

“Not so bad. Would you like to try a surrounding move with me?” replied Jiang Wei.

“Why not?”

The two armies moved in orderly ranks. Deng Ai stood in the midst of his army, giving the necessary orders. Then the clash came, but his tactics did not hold. Then, Jiang Wei waved a certain signal flag, and his force suddenly assumed the form of a serpent coiled on the ground with Deng Ai in the center. Shouts arose all about him, and Deng Ai could not understand what had happened and began to feel afraid. Gradually, the troops of Shu closed in upon him, and he saw no way of escape.

“Deng Ai, you must surrender!” cried the soldiers.

“Indeed a moment of pride has led me into the trap of Jiang Wei!” he sighed.

Suddenly, from the northwest a cohort dashed in. To Deng Ai’s great joy, they were soldiers of Wei, and they forced over the battle array and released him. The leader was Sima Wang.

But although Deng Ai had been rescued, his nine camps were seized by his enemy and he had to retire. He led his army to the south of River Wei and made a camp.

“How did you know exactly where to strike in that maze?” asked Deng Ai of his rescuer.

Sima Wang replied, “In my youth, I went to study in Jingzhou and was friendly with Shi Guangyuan and Cui Zhouping. They explained that formation to me. Jiang Wei used what is known as ‘The Serpent Coil,’ and the only way to break it is to attack the head, which I saw was in the northwest.”

Deng Ai replied, "Although I have studied formations, I do not know all the modifications. But since you know about this, we may be able to recover our camps."

"I fear the little I have learned will not be enough to overcome Jiang Wei."

"Tomorrow, you shall contend with him, and while his attention is engaged, I will attack the rear of Qishan, and we will recover our camps."

So a force was prepared to attack on the morrow, and Deng Ai sent a letter of challenge to a contest in tactics for the same day. Jiang Wei marked in to accept.

Jiang Wei said to his officers, "In the secret book that I received from the Prime Minister, the variations of the formation are three hundred and sixty-five, corresponding to the circuit of the heavens. This challenge from them is as one going to teach hewing to the god of carpenters. I think some ruse lies behind this. Can you guess what it is?"

Liao Hua replied, "While they engage your attention in this competition, they intend to attack our rear."

"Just so; that is also my opinion," replied Jiang Wei.

So he prepared a counter-stroke by sending Liao Hua and Zhang Yi to lie in wait at the back of the hills with ten thousand troops.

Next day, Jiang Wei led all the troops from the nine camps out and drew up in front of the hills. Sima Wang came out on the other side and presently rode to the front to parley.

"You have challenged me to a contest. Now draw up your army for me to see," said Jiang Wei.

Sima Wang did so and arrayed the eight diagrams.

“That is what we know as the Octagon,” said Jiang Wei. “But it is nothing wonderful, only a sort of array fit for a brigand’s raid.”

“You also have only stolen another man’s tactics,” replied his adversary.

“How many modifications of this are there?” asked Jiang Wei.

“Since I have arranged this, naturally I know the variations, of which there are nine nines, making eighty-one.”

“Try them.”

Sima Wang returned to his array and evolved many, finally riding out and asking his opponent if he recognized them.

“My formation boasts three hundred and sixty-five variations. You are but a frog in a well and know nothing of the deeper mysteries.”

Now Sima Wang knew that so many variations were possible but had not studied them. However, he put on a bold air and said contemptuously, “I do not believe you. Prove it!”

“Go and call Deng Ai,” replied Jiang Wei. “I will display them to him.”

“General Deng Ai has excellent plans and does not think much of such tactics.”

“What plans? I suppose you mean a plan to keep me here while he tries a surprise attack in the rear.”

Sima Wang was aghast. He made a sudden dash forward, and a melee began. Jiang Wei made a signal with his whip, and his force poured in from both wings. The troops of Wei were seized with sudden panic, threw down their weapons, and fled.

Now Deng Ai had hurried on Zheng Lun to make the first attack. As Zheng Lun turned the corner of the hill, a bomb exploded. At once, the

drums rolled and an ambush discovered itself. Liao Hua was in command. Neither side stayed to parley, and the leaders engaged in single combat. In the first encounter, Liao Hua cut Zheng Lun down.

Deng Ai had not expected such preparation, and he hastened to withdraw. Then Zhang Yi came forth and attacked on the other side. The army of Wei was worsted. Deng Ai fought his way out, but he bore four arrow wounds upon his body. He got to the river, where he found Sima Wang, and they discussed how to get away.

But Sima Wang proposed another form of attack.

“Recently, the Ruler of Shu has had a favorite, Eunuch Huang Hao, in whom he places all his trust and with whom he spends his time in one round of pleasure. Let us use the eunuch to sow distrust between the Emperor and his general and so get Jiang Wei recalled. In that way, we shall retrieve our defeat.”

So Deng Ai assembled his advisers and asked who could go into Shu and get into communication with Huang Hao.

Dang Jun volunteered at once. Deng Ai entrusted gold and pearls and precious things to him, and sent him into Shu to win the treacherous alliance of the eunuch. As Dang Jun went, he also disseminated reports that Jiang Wei was angry and intended to go over to Wei.

These rumors became the common talk in Chengdu, and everyone believed them. Huang Hao carried them to the Emperor, and a messenger was sent to call the general to the capital.

Meanwhile, Jiang Wei tried every day to bring the enemy to give battle, but they remained obstinately behind their defenses. Jiang Wei began to think some evil scheme was afoot, when suddenly he was recalled by imperial edict. Although ignorant of the reason, he could not disobey, and

when he began the retreat, Deng Ai and Sima Wang knew that their plot had succeeded. They broke camp and set out to attack the retreating army.

Because of court intrigues,
Yue Yi and Yue Fei failed.

How matters went will be told in the next chapter.



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Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXV

CHAPTER 114

DRIVING TO THE SOUTH GATE, CAO MAO PLUNGES INTO DEATH;
ABANDONING STORES, JIANG WEI DEFEATS THE WEI ARMY.

When the order to retreat was given, Liao Hua said, "A leader in the field is independent and need not obey even the command of his prince."

Zhang Yi said, "The country begins to resent these many years of war. Rather, take the occasion of the victory you have just won to return and pacify the people."

"It is good," said Jiang Wei.

A systematic and orderly retirement began. The army of Wei, loath to forgo an opportunity, followed, but the absence of the least confusion gave them no chance.

As he saw his enemy disappearing in perfect order, Deng Ai sighed, "Jiang Wei is a worthy inheritor of the warlike methods of Zhuge Liang."

Deng Ai did not pursue but returned to his camp on Qishan.

On his return to Chengdu, Jiang Wei had audience with the Latter Ruler, whereat he inquired, "Your Majesty has commanded me to return for an important reason?"

The Latter Ruler replied, "Because you have been so long on the frontier, Noble Sir. I thought the soldiers must be weary. There was no other reason."

“Your Majesty, thy servant had got his camps onto Qishan and was on the eve of complete success. To leave off thus in the middle just played into the hands of our enemies. Surely Deng Ai found means of sowing distrust in me.”

The Latter Ruler sat lost in thought, and silent.

Jiang Wei continued, “I am pledged to destroy those rebels and prove my devotion to my country. Your Majesty should not listen to the babble of mean persons till distrust grows in your heart.”

“I do not distrust you,” said the Latter Ruler after a long pause. “You may return into Hanzhong and await the next favorable opportunity.”

Jiang Wei left the court and betook himself into Hanzhong to the army.

Dang Jun went back to the Qishan camp and reported his success.

Deng Ai and Sima Wang rejoiced, saying, “In the River Lands, trouble is not far off when the ruler and his servants do not live in harmony.”

They sent Dang Jun to Luoyang to tell his own story to Sima Zhao, who also rejoiced, for he ardently desired to subdue Shu.

On this matter, Sima Zhao consulted Jia Chong, Commander of the Center Guard.

“What do you think of an attack upon Shu?”

“Not to be considered,” said Jia Chong. “The Emperor does not trust you, and your departure would be the beginning of trouble for you. Last year, when a yellow dragon was seen in the Ningling Well and all the officers were felicitating the Emperor upon such a very auspicious occurrence, the Emperor said, ‘It is not auspicious; just the reverse. The

dragon symbolizes the ruler. To be neither in Heaven, nor on Earth among the people, but to be in a well, is a dark portent and bodes evil.'

"He wrote some verses, and one stanza undoubtedly points to you, my lord. It reads:

"The dragon like a prisoner is,
No longer leaps he in the abyss.
He soars not to the Milky Way
Nor can he in the meadows play;
But coiled within a dismal well,
With slimy creatures he must dwell,
Must close his jaws, his claws retract,
Alas! Quite like myself, in fact.'"

The recital of the poem annoyed Sima Zhao. "This fellow is very like Cao Fang, and if I do not remove him he will hurt me," said he.

"I will see to it for you," said Jia Chong.

In the fifth year of Sweet Dew in the Wei calendar (AD 261), during the fourth month, in summer, Sima Zhao had the effrontery to go to court armed. However, the Ruler of Wei received him with exaggerated courtesy.

The courtiers said, "The services of the Regent Marshal are so magnificent, and his virtue so high that he should be rewarded with the title 'Duke of Jin' and the Nine Dignities."

Cao Mao hung his head and kept silent.

And Sima Zhao himself said, discontentedly, "My father and my brother have all given great services to Wei, and yet I deserve not being a mere Duke of Jin?"

"Should I dare not do what you requested?" said Cao Mao.

“That poem about the Lurking Dragon called us ‘slimy creatures.’ What sort of politeness is that?” said Sima Zhao.

The Ruler of Wei had nothing to say, and the haughty minister left the chamber, smiling cruelly.

Cao Mao retired, taking with him Minister Wang Jing, Adviser Wang Shen, and General of the Cavalry Wang Ye, and they went to a private chamber to consult. Cao Mao was very sad.

He said, “There is no doubt that Sima Zhao intends to usurp the Throne—everybody knows that. But I will not sit thereon, patiently awaiting the indignity of being pushed off. Cannot you gentlemen help me to kill him?”

“He may not be slain,” said Wang Jing. “That will not do. In the old state of Lu, King Zhao could not bear with the Ji family, and ran away, thus losing his country. But this Sima Zhao and his family have been in power very long and have innumerable supporters, many of whom are quite independent of any act of his, whether loyal or disloyal. They support him under any conditions. Your Majesty’s guards are few and weak and incapable—not the ones for any desperate effort. It would be most lamentable if Your Majesty could not bear this trial. The correct course is to wait and not act hastily.”

“If I can bear this, what cannot I bear?” said Cao Mao. “But I will do something, and if I die, what matters?”

He went into the private apartments and spoke to the Empress Dowager.

Wang Shen, Wang Jing, and Wang Ye sat outside talking.

“This matter is coming to a head, and unless we want to be put to death and all our loved ones with us, we had better go and warn Sima

Zhao,” said Wang Shen.

This advice angered Wang Jing, and he said, “The prince’s sorrow is the minister’s shame, and a shamed minister dies. Dare you contemplate treachery?”

Wang Jing would have nothing to do with this visit to Sima Zhao, but the other two went to the Prime Minister’s palace to betray their prince.

Shortly after, Cao Mao appeared, called the Officer of the Guard, Jiao Bo, and bade him muster his force, as many as he could. Jiao Bo got together about three hundred, and this little force marched out to the beating of a drum as escort to a small carriage, in which sat the Ruler of Wei, gripping his sword. They proceeded south.

Wang Jing stepped to the front and prayed Cao Mao to stay his steps and not go.

“To go against Sima Zhao with such a force is driving the sheep into the tiger’s jaws. To die such a death is a vain sacrifice. Not that I want to live, but this can do nothing,” said Wang Jing.

“Do not hinder me. I have made up my mind,” replied the Ruler of Wei, heading toward the Dragon Gate.

Presently, Jia Chong came in sight. He was armed and mounted on a fine horse. Beside him rode two generals, Cheng Zu and Cheng Ji, and behind him followed a body of mail-clad guards, who shouted one to another as they rode.

Then Cao Mao held up his sword and cried, “I am the Son of Heaven. Who are you thus breaking into the Forbidden City? Are you come to murder your lawful ruler?”

The soldiers suddenly stopped, for they were palace guards.

Then, Jia Chong shouted to Cheng Ji, "What did Duke Sima Zhao train you for, if not for this day's work?"

Cheng Ji took his halberd and turned to Jia Chong, saying, "Death or capture?"

"Duke Sima Zhao said the man had to die," replied Jia Chong.

Cheng Ji rushed toward the carriage.

"Fool! How dare you?" cried the Ruler of Wei.

But the shout was cut short by a thrust from the halberd full in the breast; another thrust, and the point came out at the back, so that Cao Mao lay there, dead, beside his carriage. Jiao Bo, coming up to strike a blow in defense, was also slain, and the little escort scattered.

Wang Jing, who had followed, upbraided Jia Chong, shouting, "Rebel and traitor! How dare you kill the Emperor?"

Jia Chong got angry and bade his lictors arrest Wang Jing and stop his tongue.

When they told Sima Zhao, he went into the Palace, but the Emperor was dead. He assumed an air of being greatly shocked and beat his head against the carriage, weeping and lamenting the while. He sent to tell all the officials of high rank.

When Imperial Guardian Sima Fu saw the dead body of the Emperor, he threw himself beside it, his head resting thereon, and wept, saying, "It is my fault that they slew Your Majesty!"

Sima Fu had a coffin brought, and the remains were laid therein and borne to the West Hall. Therein, Sima Zhao entered and summoned the chief officers to a council. They came, all but Minister Chen Tai. Sima Zhao noticed his absence and sent the Chair of the Secretariat Xun Yi, his uncle, to call him.

Chen Tai wept aloud, saying, “Gossips often class me and my uncle together. Yet today is my uncle less virtuous than I.”

However, Chen Tai obeyed the summons and came, dressed in the coarse, white cloth of mourning, and prostrated himself before the bier. Sima Zhao feigned to be grieved, also.

“How can this day’s work be judged?” said Sima Zhao.

“If only Jia Chong be put to death, that will only be a slight atonement to satisfy the empire,” replied Chen Tai.

Sima Zhao was silent and thought long before he spoke. Then he said, “How about a little less severe?”

“That is only the beginning. I know not other punishments less severe.”

“Cheng Ji is the ungodly rebel and actual criminal. He should suffer the death of shame—and his family, too,” said Sima Zhao.

Thereupon, Cheng Ji broke out into abuse of Sima Zhao and reviled him, saying, “It was not my crime: it was Jia Chong who passed on your own orders!”

Sima Zhao bade them cut out his tongue and put him to death. They did so; Cheng Ji and his brother Cheng Zu were both put to death in the marketplace, and their families were exterminated.



“The Emperor must die,” thus spoke Sima Zhao full
plain

In Jia Chong’s hearing; and the Emperor was slain.

Although they killed Cheng Ji, who dealt the blow,

The author of the crime we all well know.



Wang Jing's whole household were imprisoned. He himself was standing in the courthouse when he saw his mother, Lady Zhao, being brought up a prisoner.

He knocked his head on the ground and wept, saying, "O unfilial son to bring distress upon a gentle mother!"

But his mother laughed.

"Who does not die?" cried she. "The only thing to be feared is not dying the proper death. Who would regret dying like this?"

When, next day, the family were led out to execution, both mother and son smiled as they went past. But the whole city wept tears of sorrow.



Mother Yuan was famous at the rise of Han,
Mother Zhao was distinguished at the end of Wei,
With purest virtue and unfaltering heart,
With resolution stern she played her part.
Her fortitude was great as Taishan Mountain,
Her life but as the floating down did count,
Like mother like son, their fame never will die,
So long as shall endure the earth and sky.



Imperial Guardian Sima Fu proposed that the body of the late Emperor should receive a royal funeral, and Sima Zhao consented. Jia Chong and

those of his party urged Sima Zhao to assume the Throne and replace Wei, but he refused.

“Formerly, King Wen had two-thirds of the empire, and yet he supported and served the state of Yin to its end. Wherefore, Confucius called him ‘Complete of Virtue.’ Emperor Cao of Wei would not replace the Hans, nor will I accept an abdication of Wei.”

Those who heard this felt that in these words was an implication that he intended to place his own son Sima Yan on the throne, and they ceased to urge him to act.

In the sixth month of that year, Cao Huang, Duke of Changdao, was raised to the throne as Emperor, the era style being changed to Wonderful Beginning, the first year (AD 260). Cao Huang was a son of Cao Yu, Prince of Yan, and a grandson of Cao Cao.

Sima Zhao was made Prime Minister and Duke of Jin. Beside, he received gifts of one hundred thousand gold coins and ten thousand rolls of silk. All the officers were promoted or received honors.

When these doings in Wei were told in Shu, Jiang Wei seized upon them as pretext for another war, to punish Wei for the deposition of its ruler. So letters were written calling upon Wu to help, and a memorial was sent to the Throne. The army raised was one hundred fifty thousand, and there were many carts with boxes made to fit them. Liao Hua and Zhang Yi were the Leaders of the Van. Liao Hua was to march to the Ziwu Valley, and Zhang Yi to the Luo Valley, while Jiang Wei took the Xie Valley road. They marched at the same time and hastened toward Qishan.

Deng Ai was still on the Qishan Mountains, training the Wei soldiers, when he heard that the Shu armies were once more on the warpath. He called his officers together.

And Adviser Wang Guan said, "I have a plan to propose, but I will not tell it openly. However, I have written it down for your consideration."

Deng Ai took the envelop, opened, and read it.

"Though excellent, I fear it is not enough to beguile the leader of Shu," said Deng Ai as he finished reading.

"I am willing to stake my life on it," said Wang Guan, "and I will lead the way."

"Since you have such confidence, you may try. You ought certainly to succeed."

So five thousand troops were put under the leadership of Wang Guan, and they set out for the Xie Valley, where they fell in with the scouts of Jiang Wei's force.

Seeing these, their leader, Wang Guan, shouted, "We are deserters. Tell your leader!"

So the scouts told Jiang Wei, who replied, "Hold up the soldiers, letting their leader only come to me."

Wang Guan went forward and kneeled before Jiang Wei, saying, "I am a nephew of Wang Jing, and I hate Sima Zhao for what he has done to the Emperor and my family, and I wish to join you and my five thousand soldiers with me. I also desire to be sent against the rebel army that I may avenge my uncle."

Then said Jiang Wei, "Since you are sincere in your desertion, I must be sincere in my treatment of you. The one thing my army needs is grain.

There is plenty at the border of the River Lands. If you can transport it to Qishan, I can go straightway and take the Qishan camps of Deng Ai.”

This reply rejoiced Wang Guan, who saw that Jiang Wei was just going to walk into the trap. So he agreed at once.

“But you will not need five thousand troops to see after the transport. Take three thousand and leave two thousand as guides for me.”

Wang Guan, thinking that suspicions would be raised if he refused, took the three thousand of his troops and marched away, and the other two thousand were attached to the army of Shu.

Then Xiahou Ba was announced, and, when he came in, he said, “O Commander, why have you believed the tale of this Wang Guan? In Wei, I never heard that Wang Guan was related to Wang Jing, though it is true I never made particular inquiries. You should look into it, for there is much pretense in his story.”

“I know Wang Guan is false,” said Jiang Wei, with a smile. “That is why I have taken away many of his force. I am meeting trick with trick.”

“How do you know for certain he is false?”

“Sima Zhao is as crafty as Cao Cao. If he slew all Wang Jing’s family, would he have left a nephew and sent that nephew to the pass beyond his own reach with soldiers? You saw this, as did I.”

So Jiang Wei did not go out by the Xie Valley, but he set an ambush there, ready for any move of Wang Guan. And indeed, within ten days, the ambush caught a man with a letter from Wang Guan to Deng Ai telling him what had come about. From the letter and the bearer thereof, Jiang Wei learned that Wang Guan would divert a convoy of grain to the Wei camps on the twentieth and Deng Ai was to send troops to Yunshan Valley to help.

Jiang Wei beheaded the courier. Then he sent another letter to Deng Ai by a man dressed as a Wei soldier, the date being altered to the fifteenth instead of the twentieth.

As a preparation, Jiang Wei ordered many wagons to be emptied of their grain and laden with inflammables, covered with green cloth. The two thousand Wei soldiers were ordered to show flags belonging to the Shu transport corps. Then, Jiang Wei and Xiahou Ba went into the valleys in ambush, while Jiang Shu was ordered to march to the Xie Valley, and Liao Hua and Zhang Yi were sent to capture Qishan.

The letter apparently from Wang Guan was sufficient for Deng Ai, and he wrote back to say it was agreed. So on the fifteenth day, Deng Ai led out fifty thousand veteran troops and moved in sight near Yunshan Valley. And the scouts saw endless carts of grain and fodder in the distance, zigzagging through the mountains. When Deng Ai got closer, he distinguished the uniforms of Wei.

His staff urged him, saying, "It is getting dark, O General. Hurry to help Wang Guan escort the convoy out of the valley!"

"The mountains ahead are hazardous," said the general. "If by any chance an ambush has been laid, we could hardly escape. We will wait here."

But just then two horsemen came up at a gallop and said, "Just as General Wang Guan was crossing the frontier with the convoy, he was pursued, and reinforcements are urgently needed!"

Deng Ai, realizing the importance of the request, gave orders to press onward. It was the first watch, and a full moon was shining as bright as day.

Shouting was heard behind the hills, and he could only conclude it was the noise of the battle in which Wang Guan was engaged.

So Deng Ai dashed over the hills. But suddenly, a body of troops came out from the shelter of a grove of trees, and at their head rode the Shu leader, Fu Qian.

“Deng Ai, you are stupid! You have just fallen into the trap set for you by our general. Dismount and prepare for death!”

Deng Ai halted and turned to flee. Then the wagons burst into flame. That flame was a signal, and down came the army of Shu.

He heard shouts all round him, “A thousand ounces of gold for anyone who captures Deng Ai, and a lordship over ten thousand households as well!”

Terrified, Deng Ai dropped his arms, threw aside his armor, slipped from his steed, mingled with the footmen, and with them scrambled up the hills. The generals of Shu only looked for him among the mounted leaders, never guessing that he had gotten away among the common soldiers. So he was not captured.

Jiang Wei gathered in his victorious army and went to meet Wang Guan and his convoy.

Having made all arrangements, as he thought, complete, Wang Guan was patiently awaiting the development of his scheme.

But suddenly, a trusted subordinate came and told him, “The ruse has been discovered, and Deng Ai has already suffered defeat!”

Wang Guan sent out some scouts, and the report was confirmed, with the addition that the Shu armies were coming against him. Moreover, clouds of dust were rising. There was no way of escape, so Wang Guan

ordered his troops to set fire to the convoy, and soon huge flames were rising high into the air.

“The case is desperate,” cried Wang Guan. “It is a fight to the death!”

He led his force westward, but the army of Shu came in pursuit. Jiang Wei thought Wang Guan would try at all costs to get back to his own side, but instead, Wang Guan went on toward Hanzhong. As his troops were too few to risk a battle, Wang Guan ordered them to burn and destroy all military stations and even the Plank Trail as he went.

Fearing the loss of Hanzhong, Jiang Wei made all haste along the byroads after Wang Guan. Surrounded on all sides, Wang Guan jumped into the Black Dragon River and so died. Those of his soldiers who survived were slain by Jiang Wei.

Though a victory had been won and Wang Guan killed, it was costly. Many wagons and much grain had been lost, and the Plank Trail had been destroyed. Jiang Wei led his army into Hanzhong.

Deng Ai made his way back to Qishan. From there, he reported his defeat to the Ruler of Wei and asked for degradation as a penalty. However, Sima Zhao saw that Deng Ai had rendered good services, so he did not degrade the general, but, on the other hand, sent him magnificent gifts, which Deng Ai distributed to the families of the soldiers who had been killed. Sima Zhao also sent him fifty thousand troops as reinforcement, lest Shu should attack again.

Jiang Wei set about the restoration of the Plank Trail, ready for the next expedition.

Repair the roads for marching feet to tread,

The strife will only cease when all are dead.

The next chapter will tell who won.



END OF ACT XXV

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
by Luo Guanzhong

ACT XXVI:

THE WORLD UNDER HEAVEN:
REUNIFICATION OF THE EMPIRE

Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXVI

CHAPTER 115

LISTENING TO SLANDER, THE LATTER RULER RECALLS HIS ARMY;
LIVING IN FARMS, JIANG WEI AVOIDS DISASTER.

In the autumn of the fifth year of Wonderful Sight, in the Shu-Han calendar (AD 262), Jiang Wei was occupied with preparations for the renewal of an attack: mending the hill roads, gathering stores, and mobilizing his boats on the waterways of Hanzhong. These things done, he memorialized the Throne, asking permission to go again to the attack:

“Although I have not been wholly victorious nor accomplished great things, yet I have put fear into the hearts of the Wei armies. Our soldiers have been long under training, and they must now be used, or the army will go to pieces for lack of exercise. The soldiers are ready to die, the officers prepared for all risks, and I am determined to conquer or perish.”

The Latter Ruler did not consent at once.

As he was hesitating, Qiao Zhou stood forth and said, “I have observed the heavens. I have seen the leadership stars in Shu dull and obscured. This expedition will be disastrous, and I hope Your Majesty will not approve.”

The Latter Ruler replied, “Let us see the results of this campaign. If it fails, then the war shall cease.”

Qiao Zhou tried to dissuade the Latter Ruler two or three more times, but he failed. In despair, he withdrew to his home and retired on the pretext of illness.

As the final preparations were being made, Jiang Wei said to Liao Hua, “We are pledged to get through to the Middle Land this time. What do you advise to start with?”

“I dare not presume to advise you, General. For years we have been fighting and giving the people no rest. In Deng Ai we find a most formidable and resourceful opponent and an extraordinarily capable man, so that you must exert yourself to the very utmost.”

Jiang Wei was annoyed. Said he, “The late Prime Minister made six attempts, all for the state. I have attacked eight times. Was any one of those attacks to serve my private ends? This time, I go to attack Taoyang, and no one shall tell me nay. I will punish opposition with death.”

Jiang Wei left Liao Hua in charge of the base in Hanzhong and marched with three hundred thousand troops to Taoyang. His movements were reported in the Qishan camps, and Deng Ai’s spies confirmed the news.

It happened that Sima Wang was with Deng Ai, discussing military matters, and the former, when he heard it, said, “That move is a decoy: he does not mean it. What he really intends is an attack on Qishan.”

“But he has really gone to Taoyang,” said Deng Ai.

“How can you know?”

“Formerly, Jiang Wei has always opened with a march to those parts of the country where we have stored supplies. Taoyang has no stores, so he thinks we shall not have taken care for its defense as we shall concentrate our efforts on Qishan. But, if he can take that place, he can collect stores there and get into touch with the Qiang tribespeople and finally work out some grand plan.”

“Supposing this true, what should we do?”

“I advise the abandonment of this place and a march in two bodies toward Taoyang. I know a small town called Houxia, eight miles from Taoyang, which is the throat of the place. You go to Taoyang, hide your force, and open the gates. Then, act as I shall tell you presently. I will lie in wait at Houxia. We shall score a victory.”

Deng Ai gave Shi Zuan the command of the camps in Qishan when the main body left.

Meanwhile, Xiahou Ba led the van of the Shu army toward Taoyang. As he drew near, he noticed the place seemed to have no defenses; not a flagstaff reared its head. The gates stood wide open.

He was too wary to go straight in, however, and said, “Is there any ruse in there?”

His generals said, “We think the city was deserted when they heard your army coming. A few people were running away along the southern road.”

Xiahou Ba rode south and saw there that the northwest road, at a little distance from the city, was crowded with fugitives.

“The city is really empty,” said Xiahou Ba.

He led the way in, all ready to fight, and the troops followed. As they came near to the curtain wall, however, a bomb exploded. At this sound the drums beat, trumpets blared, and flags suddenly appeared. At the same moment, the drawbridge rose.

“Caught!” said Xiahou Ba.

As he turned to retire, the arrows and stones flew down in clouds, and under these Xiahou Ba and many of his soldiers lost their lives.



Most able strategist and brave,
Xiahou Ba, outwitted here
By Deng Ai, more prudent still, and slain,
Deserves a pitying tear.



The flights of arrows from the ramparts were followed by a sortie, which broke up the force of Shu entirely, and the troops fled. However, Jiang Wei came up and drove Sima Wang back into the city. The army of Shu camped beside the walls. Jiang Wei was very grieved at the loss of Xiahou Ba.

That night, Deng Ai came up secretly and attacked the Shu camp. At the same time, the defenders within the city made a sortie. Jiang Wei could not resist the double attack, and left the field. He marched some seven miles and camped.

Twice beaten, the soldiers of Shu were very downcast.

Jiang Wei tried to console them, saying, “Loss or gain is the platitude of war. But I am not worried yet about our recent defeats, for a total victory will surely come in this expedition if all of you strive your best. But remember, no mutiny! He who talks of retreat will suffer death.”

Then Zhang Yi said, “With so many troops of Wei here, their camp at Qishan must be undefended. I propose, General, that while you continue the contest here with Deng Ai, I go to try to capture the nine camps. If I succeed, Changan will be at our mercy.”

The second division of the army was detached to march on Qishan, and Jiang Wei went down to Houxia to provoke Deng Ai into fighting. The challenge this time was accepted forthwith. Deng Ai led his troops out and engaged with Jiang Wei in a fight, but after thirty bouts without a decision, both retired to their camps.

For days after this, Jiang Wei challenged again and again, but Deng Ai declined and would not fight. The Shu soldiers howled abuse and hurled insults at their opponents, but all without effect.

Then Deng Ai thought within himself, *There must be some reason for this persistence. I think they have sent an army to try to seize Qishan while they hold me here. Shi Zuan and the force there are insufficient, and I shall have to go to the rescue.*

Deng Ai called his son Deng Zhong, and said, "Hold this place most carefully. Let them challenge as they may; do not go out. Tonight I go to the help of Qishan."

It was night, and Jiang Wei was in his tent, intent upon his plans, when he was disturbed by a great shouting and drumming. They told him Deng Ai had suddenly appeared. The generals asked leave to go out to fight.

"Let no one move!" said Jiang Wei.

The fact was Deng Ai had only made a demonstration at the camp of Shu on his way to reinforce Qishan.

Then Jiang Wei said to his officers, "The attack of Deng Ai was a feint. He has certainly gone to relieve Qishan."

So Jiang Wei decided to go to the aid of Zhang Yi. He left Fu Qian to guard the camp, and he marched away with three thousand troops.

Zhang Yi was then actually attacking the Wei position on Qishan. Shi Zuan had few troops, and it looked as though the defenders must soon give in, when the sudden appearance of Deng Ai made all the difference. The onslaught of Deng Ai's force drove off Zhang Yi, and he was forced to take refuge behind the hills. No road was open to him. When things looked worst, he saw the Wei soldiers suddenly falling back in confusion.

“General Jiang Wei has come!” they told him.

Zhang Yi took the opportunity to return to the attack, and the tables were turned. Deng Ai lost the fight and retired into his camp, which Jiang Wei surrounded and attacked vigorously.

In Chengdu, the Latter Ruler fell daily more and more under the malign influence of Huang Hao, who encouraged him in every form of self-indulgence and ministered to every desire for luxury and dissipation. Government was left to look after itself.

At that time, High Minister Liu Yang had a very beautiful wife, Lady Hu. One day, she went into the Palace to visit the Empress, who kept her there a whole month. Liu Yang was not without suspecting an intrigue with the Latter Ruler and took a brutal revenge. He bound Lady Hu, and made five hundred of his soldiers shame her to the last degree by beating her on the face with their boots. She swooned many times.

The story got to the ears of the Latter Ruler, and he ordered the officials concerned to investigate and decide the crime and its punishment.

The judges found that: “Soldiers are not proper persons to administer a punishment to a woman, and the face is not a portion of the body to be mortified: the author of this crime ought to be put to death.”

Wherefore, Liu Yang was beheaded.

As time went on, the Latter Ruler indulged in unbridled sensuality, and gradually all good people left the government, giving place to the meanest, who soon swarmed there.

Among the sycophants of Huang Hao was Yan Yun, General of the Right Army, whose lack of merit had not stood in the way of preferment.

Hearing of Jiang Wei's defeats at Qishan, Yan Yun got his friend Huang Hao to propose to the Latter Ruler, saying, "Jiang Wei should be recalled, as he has not been able to score a decisive victory. Yan Yun can be sent to replace him."

The Latter Ruler agreed, and the edict was issued.

One day, as Jiang Wei was working out his plan of attack on the camps of Wei, three edicts came, all to the same effect, recalling him to the capital. Disobedience being out of the question, Jiang Wei ceased all operations and sent the Taoyang force back first. Then, gradually, he and Zhang Yi withdrew with the others.

Deng Ai, in his camp, wondered at the rolling of drums one night, but next day he heard that the Shu camps were empty. However, he suspected some ruse and did not pursue.

Arrived in Hanzhong, the army halted, and Jiang Wei went on to the capital in company with the messenger who had brought his orders. Here, he waited ten days, and still the Latter Ruler held no court. He began to suspect mischief.

One day, near a Palace gate he met Secretary General Xi Zheng and asked, "Do you know the reason for my recall?"

“What, General! Do you not know? Huang Hao wanted to push Yan Yun into favor, so he intrigued for your recall. Now they have found out Deng Ai is too clever to be tackled, and so they are not fighting anymore.”

“I shall certainly have to put this eunuch fellow out of the way,” said Jiang Wei.

“Hush! You are the successor of the Martial Lord, Zhuge Liang, the man to whom he bequeathed his unfinished task. You are too important to act hastily or indiscreetly. If the Emperor withdrew his support, it would go ill for you.”

“Sir, what you say is true,” replied Jiang Wei.

However, soon after this, Jiang Wei, with a small party, got into the Palace. The Latter Ruler was enjoying himself with Huang Hao in the gardens. They told Huang Hao, who at once hid himself among the rocks by a pond.

Jiang Wei approached his master and prostrated himself, saying, “Why did Your Majesty recall me? I had the enemy in my power at Qishan when the triple edicts came.”

The Latter Ruler hummed and hawed but made no reply. Then Jiang Wei began his real grievance.

“This Huang Hao is wicked and artful and seems to have the last say in everything. The times of the Emperor Ling and the Ten Regular Attendants have returned. Your Majesty may recall Zhang Rang recently or Zhao Gao in the old time. If you will only slay this man, the court will be purified, and you may return gloriously to the home of your fathers.”

The Latter Ruler smiled, saying, “Huang Hao is but a minor servant, one who runs errands for me. If he tried to do as you say, he could not. I

always wondered why Dong Yun seemed to hate poor Huang Hao so much. Now you are the same. I pray you, Noble Sir, take no notice of him.”

“Unless Your Majesty gets rid of him, evil is very close,” said Jiang Wei, beating his head upon the ground.

The Latter Ruler replied, “If you love anyone, you want him to live; if you dislike him, you desire his death. Can you not bear with my one poor eunuch?”

The Latter Ruler bade one of the attendants go and call Huang Hao. When Huang Hao approached the pavilion, the Latter Ruler told him to ask pardon of Jiang Wei.

Huang Hao prostrated himself and wept, saying, “I am always in attendance upon the Sacred One—that is all I do. I never meddle in state affairs. I pray you, General, pay no heed to what people say. If you desire my death, I am in your hands, but pity me.”

And tears ran down his cheeks. Jiang Wei went away in ill humor. Outside, he sought his friend Xi Zheng and told him what had happened.

“General, you are in grave danger,” said Xi Zheng. “And if you fall, the country falls with you.”

“Can you advise me?” said Jiang Wei. “How can I secure the state and myself?”

Xi Zheng replied, “There is a place of refuge for you in the West Valley Land, and that is Tazhong. It is a rich county, and you can make a cantonment there like the Martial Lord did. Request the Emperor to let you go thither. You can gather in corn and wheat for your armies, you can secure all the west of Longyou, you can keep Wei from troubling Hanzhong, you will retain your military authority so that no one will dare

intrigue against you, and you will be safe. Thus, you can ensure the safety of the state and yourself. You should lose no time.”

“Your speech is gold and jewels!” said Jiang Wei, gratefully.

Without loss of time, Jiang Wei memorialized the Throne and obtained the Latter Ruler’s consent. Then he returned to Hanzhong, assembled his officers, and told them his plans.

“Our many expeditions have failed to achieve success, owing to lack of supplies. Now, I am about to take eighty thousand troops to Tazhong to form a cantonment and grow wheat and corn ready for the next expedition. You are spent with much fighting and may now repose while collecting grain and guarding Hanzhong. The armies of Wei are far from home and have to drag their grain over the mountains. They will be worn out with the labor and must soon retire. That will be the time to smite them, and success must be ours.”

Hu Ji was set over Hanshou, Wang Han over Yuecheng, Jiang Bin over Hancheng, and Jiang Shu and Fu Qian went to guard the passes. After these arrangements had been made, Jiang Wei went off to Tazhong to grow grain and mature his plans.

Deng Ai heard of these dispositions and discovered that the armies of Shu were distributed in forty camps, each connected with the next like the joints of a huge serpent. He sent out his spies to survey the country, and they made a map, which was sent to the capital.

But when the Duke of Jin, Sima Zhao, saw the memorial and the map, he was very angry.

“This Jiang Wei has invaded our country many times, and we have been unable to destroy him. He is the one sorrow of my heart.”

Said Jia Chong, “He has carried on the work of Zhuge Liang only too thoroughly, and it is hard to force him back. What you need is some crafty brave to assassinate him and so remove this constant menace of war.”

But Assistant Xun Xu said, “That is not the way. Liu Shan, the Ruler of Shu, is steeped in dissipation and has given all his confidence to one favorite, Eunuch Huang Hao. The higher officers of state are concerned solely with their own safety, and Jiang Wei has gone to Tazhong only that he may save his life. If you send an able leader and a strong army, victory is certain. Where is the need for an assassin’s dagger?”

“These are excellent words,” said Sima Zhao, with a laugh, “but if I would attack Shu, where is the leader?”

“Deng Ai is the ablest leader of the day,” said Xun Xu. “Give him Zhong Hui as his second, and the thing is done.”

“Exactly what I think!” said Sima Zhao. So he summoned Zhong Hui and said to him, “I desire to send you as leader against Wu. Can you go?”

“My lord’s design is not against Wu, but Shu,” was his reply.

“How well you know my inmost thought!” said Sima Zhao. “But how would you conduct an expedition against Shu?”

“Thinking that my lord would desire to attack Shu, I have already prepared plans. Here they are.”

He laid out his maps, and thereon were shown the camps, and storehouses, and roads all complete.

Sima Zhao was highly pleased. “You are an excellent leader,” said he. “What say you to going with Deng Ai?”

“The River Lands are large, and there is space for more than one set of operations. Deng Ai can be sent along another line.”

Zhong Hui was given the title of General Who Conquers the West and the insignia of a Commander-in-Chief over the forces of the Land Within the Passes and control of the armies of Qingzhou, Xuzhou, Yanzhou, Yuzhou, Jingzhou, and Yangzhou. At the same time, a commission with authority ensign was sent to Deng Ai, giving him command of the forces beyond the pass, with the title of General Who Conquers the West. And the time for an attack on Shu was settled.

When Sima Zhao was settling the plans in the court, Deng Dun, General of the Front Army, said, “Why are you sending our armies into a distant and dangerous country and thus inviting trouble? Jiang Wei has invaded this country many times, and the wars have cost us many lives. We should rather seek safety in defense.”

“I am sending a righteous army against an unrighteous ruler. How dare you oppose my designs?”

Sima Zhao ordered the executioners to put Deng Dun to death forthwith, and they soon returned to lay his head at the foot of the steps. This frightened all those present, and they turned pale.

Sima Zhao said, “It is six years since I conquered the east, and the six years have been spent in preparation. I have long intended to reduce both Wu and Shu. Now I will destroy Shu, and then, like a flood, I will descend upon Wu and conquer that. That is the method ‘destroy Guo to capture Yu.’

“I can tell very nearly what forces they have in Shu. There are eighty or ninety thousand troops in the garrison of Capital Chengdu, forty or fifty

thousand on the frontier, while Jiang Wei has about sixty thousand in his cantonments. Against them, we can pit one hundred thousand troops beyond the pass under Deng Ai, enough to hold Jiang Wei and keep him from moving east, and Zhong Hui has two or three hundred thousand veterans within the pass. And they will march in three divisions through Luo Valley and straight into Hanzhong. Liu Shan, the Ruler of Shu, is an oblivious fool with his frontier cities in ruins, the populace and officials quaking with fear. The state will not last long.”

The assembly praised this perspicacity.

Zhong Hui marched as soon as he received his seal of office. Lest his real object should be known, he gave out that his force was directed against Wu. To give color to the pretense, he had many large ships built in Qingzhou, Yanzhou, Yuzhou, Jingzhou, and Yangzhou. He also sent Tang Zi along the coastal regions of Dengzhou and Laizhou to collect vessels.

Even his chief, Sima Zhao, was deceived and called him to ask: “I commanded you to invade the River Lands by land march. Why are you collecting ships?”

Zhong Hui replied, “If Shu hears that we intend to attack the west, they will ask assistance from Wu. So I pretend to attack Wu, and Wu will not dare to move in under a year. When Shu is beaten, the ships will be ready and useful for an expedition into the east.”

Sima Zhao was pleased. The day chosen for the march was the third day of the seventh month in the fourth year of Wonderful Beginning, in the Wei calendar (AD 264). Sima Zhao escorted his leader out of the city for three miles and then took his leave.

Shao Ti, Minister of Western Affairs, whispered a word of warning. “My lord has sent Zhong Hui with a large army against Shu. I think he is too ambitious to be trusted with such powers.”

“Think you I do not know?” said Sima Zhao.

“Then why have you sent him alone and without a colleague?”

Sima Zhao said a few words to Shao Ti which put his doubts at rest.

Zhong Hui went alone, although his master knew,
Occasion serving, he would be untrue.

The next chapter will tell the reader what Shao Ti heard.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXVI

CHAPTER 116

ON HANZHONG ROADS, ZHONG HUI DIVIDES THE ARMY; ON DINGJUN MOUNTAIN, THE MARTIAL LORD SHOWS HIS APPARITION.

The words whispered in the ear of Shao Ti proved Sima Zhao's subtlety.

Said Sima Zhao, "This morning, the officers all maintained that Shu should not be attacked, because they are timid. If I let them lead the army, they would surely be defeated. You saw Zhong Hui was set upon his plan, and he is not afraid. Shu must therefore be beaten, and then the Shu people's hearts will be torn. Beaten leaders cannot boast, and the officers of a broken state are no fit guardians of its welfare. When Zhong Hui turns against us, the people of Shu cannot support him. Further, our troops being victors, they will wish to return home and will not follow their leader into revolt. Hence, there is nothing to be feared. I know this, as you do, but it must remain our secret."

Shao Ti showed his admiration for Sima Zhao.

In his camp, just prior to his march, Zhong Hui assembled his officers. Among them were Army Inspector Wei Guan, Assistant General Hu Lie, Generals Tian Xu, Tian Zhang, Yuan Xing, Qiu Jian, Xiahou Xian, Wang Mai, Huangfu Kai, Gou Ai, and others, some eighty of them.

"Firstly, I want a Leader of the Van," said Zhong Hui. "He must be skilled in making roads and repairing bridges."

“I will take that post,” said a voice, and the speaker was Xu Yi, son of the Tiger Leader Xu Chu.

“Nobody is fitter!” cried all present.

“You shall have the seal,” said Zhong Hui. “You are lithe and strong and have the renown of your father to maintain. Beside, all your colleagues recommend you. Your force shall be five thousands of cavalry and a thousand of footmen. You are to march into Hanzhong in three divisions: the center you will lead through the Xie Valley, the other two passing through the Luo and Ziwu Valleys. You must level and repair the roads, put the bridges in order, bore tunnels, and break away rocks. Use all diligence, for any delay will entail punishment.”

Xu Yi was told to set out immediately, and his chief would follow with one hundred thousand troops.

In the West Valley Land, as soon as Deng Ai received his orders to attack Shu, he sent Sima Wang to keep the Qiangs in check. Next, he summoned Zhuge Xu, Imperial Protector of Yongzhou; Wang Qi, Governor of Tianshui; Qian Hong, Governor of Longxi; and Yang Xin, Governor of Jincheng, and soon soldiers gathered in the West Valley Land like clouds.

One night, Deng Ai dreamed a dream wherein he was climbing a lofty mountain on the way into Hanzhong. Suddenly, a spring of water gushed out at his feet and boiled up with great force so that he was alarmed.

He awoke all in a sweat and did not sleep again, but sat awaiting the dawn. At daybreak, he summoned his guard Shao Yuan, who was skilled in the *Book of Changes*, told him the dream, and asked the interpretation.

Shao Yuan replied, "According to the book, 'water on a mountain' signifies the diagram 'Jian,' whereunder we find that the southwest augurs well but the northeast is unpropitious. Confucius said of Jian that it meant advantage in the southwest—that is, success—but the northeast spelled failure—that is, there was no road. In this expedition, General, you will overcome Shu, but you will not have a road to return."

Deng Ai listened, growing more and more sad as the interpretation of his dream was unfolded.

Just then came dispatches from Zhong Hui asking him to advance into Hanzhong together. Deng Ai at once sent Zhuge Xu with fifteen thousand troops to cut off Jiang Wei's retreat; and Wang Qi was to lead fifteen thousand troops to attack Tazhong from the left; Qian Hong was to march fifteen thousand troops to attack Tazhong from the right; and Yang Xin, with fifteen thousand troops, was to block Jiang Wei at Gansong. Deng Ai took command of a force to go to and fro and reinforce whatever body needed help.

Meanwhile, in the camp of Zhong Hui, all the officials came out to see him depart. It was a grand sight, the gay banners shutting out the sun, breastplates and helmets glittering. The soldiers were fit and the horses in good condition. They all felicitated the leader.

All save one, for Adviser Liu Shi was silent. He smiled grimly.

Then Grand Commander Wang Xiang made his way through the crowd and said, "Do you think these two, Zhong Hui and Deng Ai, will overcome Shu?"

Said Liu Shi, sighing, “With such brave soldiers and bold leaders and their talents, they will overcome Shu certainly. Only, I think neither will ever come back.”

“Why do you say that?”

But Liu Shi did not reply; he only smiled. And the question was not repeated.

The armies of Wei were on the march when Jiang Wei heard of the intended attack. He at once sent up a memorial:

Your Majesty needs to make defensive arrangements by commanding Zhang Yi, Left Commander of the Flying Cavalry, to guard the Yangping Pass, and Liao Hua, Right Commander of the Flying Cavalry, to guard the Yinping Bridge in Yinping. These two places are the most important points upon which depend the security of Hanzhong. Send also to engage the help of Wu. I, thy humble servant, shall gather soldiers in Tazhong ready for the march.”

That year in Shu the reign-style had been changed from Wonderful Sight, the fifth year, to Joyful Prosperity, the first year (AD 263). When the memorial of Jiang Wei came to the Latter Ruler, it found him as usual amusing himself with his favorite, Huang Hao.

He read the document and said to the eunuch, “Here Jiang Wei says that the Wei armies under Deng Ai and Zhong Hui are on the way against us. What shall we do?”

“There is nothing of the sort. Jiang Wei only wants to get a name for himself, and so he says this. Your Majesty need feel no alarm, for we can

find out the truth from a certain wise woman I know. She is a real prophetess. May I call her?"

The Latter Ruler consented, and a room was fitted up for the seance. They prepared therein incense, flowers, paper, candles, sacrificial articles and so on, and then Huang Hao went with a chariot to beg the wise woman to attend upon the Latter Ruler.

She came and was seated on the Dragon Couch. After the Latter Ruler had kindled the incense and repeated the prayer, the wise woman suddenly let down her hair, dropped her slippers, and capered about barefoot. After several rounds of this, she coiled herself up on a table.

Huang Hao then said, "The spirit has now descended. Send everyone away and pray to her."

So the attendants were dismissed, and the Latter Ruler entreated the wise woman.

Suddenly, she cried out, "I am the guardian spirit of the West River Land. Your Majesty rejoices in tranquility; why do you inquire about other matters? Within a few years, the land of Wei shall come under you, wherefore you need not be sorrowful."

She then fell to the ground as in a swoon, and it was some time before she revived. The Latter Ruler was well-satisfied with her prophecy and gave her large presents. Further, he thereafter believed all she told him. The immediate result was that Jiang Wei's memorial remained unanswered, and as the Latter Ruler was wholly given to pleasure, it was easy for Huang Hao to intercept all urgent memorials from the commander.

Meanwhile, Zhong Hui was hastening toward Hanzhong. The Van Leader Xu Yi was anxious to perform some startling exploit, and so he led his force to Nanzheng.

He said to his officers, "If we can take this pass, then we can march directly into Hanzhong. The defense is weak."

A dash was made for the fort, each one vying with the rest to be first. But the Commander of Nanzheng was Lu Xu, and he had had early information of the coming of his enemies. So on both sides of the bridge he posted soldiers armed with repeating bows and crossbows. As soon as the attacking force appeared, the signal was given by a clapper, and a terrific discharge of arrows and bolts opened. Many troops of Wei fell, and the army of Xu Yi was defeated.

Xu Yi returned and reported his misfortune. Zhong Hui himself went with a hundred armored horsemen to see the conditions. Again, the machine-bows let fly clouds of missiles, and Zhong Hui turned to flee.

Lu Xu led out five hundred troops to pursue. As Zhong Hui crossed the bridge at a gallop, the roadway gave, and his horse's hoof went through so that he was nearly thrown. The horse could not free its hoof, and Zhong Hui slipped from his back and fled on foot. As he ran down the slope of the bridge, Lu Xu came at him with a spear, but one of Zhong Hui's followers, Xun Kai by name, shot an arrow at Lu Xu and brought him to the earth.

Seeing this lucky hit, Zhong Hui turned back and signaled to his force to make an attack. They came on with a dash, the defenders were afraid to shoot, as their own troops were mingled with the enemy, and soon Zhong Hui crushed the defense and possessed the pass. The defenders scattered.

The pass being captured, Xun Kai was well-rewarded for the shot that had saved his general's life. He was promoted to Assistant General and received presents of a horse and a suit of armor.

Xu Yi was called to the tent, and Zhong Hui blamed him for the lack of care in his task, saying, “You were appointed Leader of the Van to see that the roads were put in repair, and your special duty was to see that the bridges were in good condition. Yet, on the bridge just now, my horse’s hoof was caught, and I nearly fell. Happily Xun Kai was by, or I would have been slain. You have been disobedient and must bear the penalty.”

The delinquent was sentenced to death.

The other generals tried to beg him off, pleading, “His father is Xu Chu, who had rendered good services to the state!”

“How can discipline be maintained if the laws are not enforced?” said Zhong Hui.

The sentence was carried out, and the unhappy Xu Yi’s head was exposed as a warning. This severity put fear into the hearts of the officers.

On the side of Shu, Wang Han commanded at Yuecheng, and Jiang Bin was in Hancheng. As the enemy came in great force, they dared not go out to meet them, but stood on the defensive with the gates of the cities closed.

Zhong Hui issued an order, “Speed is the soul of war: no halts.”

Li Du was ordered to lay siege to Yuecheng, and Xun Kai was to surround Hancheng. The main army under Zhong Hui would capture the Yangping Pass.

The Shu General Fu Qian commanded at the pass. He discussed plans with Jiang Shu, his second in command, and Jiang Shu was wholly in favor of defense, saying, “The enemy is too strong to think of any other course.”

“I do not agree,” replied Fu Qian. “They are now fatigued with marching, and we need not fear them. Unless we go out and attack, Yuecheng and Hancheng will fall.”

Jiang Shu made no reply. Soon the enemy arrived, and both officers went up to the wall and looked out.

As soon as Zhong Hui saw them, he shouted, “We have here a host of one hundred thousand. If you yield, you shall have higher rank than you hold now. But if you persist in holding out, then when we take the pass, you shall all perish. Jewels and pebbles will share the same destruction!”

This threat angered Fu Qian. He bade Jiang Shu guard the walls, and he went down to give battle, taking three thousand troops. He attacked, and Zhong Hui retreated. Fu Qian pursued. But soon the army of Wei closed up their ranks and counterattacked. Fu Qian turned to retire. But when he reached his own defenses, he saw they flew the flags of Wei—the banners of Shu had gone.

“I have yielded!” cried Jiang Shu from the ramparts.

Fu Qian shouted angrily, “Ungrateful and treacherous rogue! How can you ever face the world again?”

But that did no good. Fu Qian turned to go once more into the battle. He was soon surrounded. He fought desperately, but could not win clear. His troops fell one by one, and when they were reduced to one out of ten, he cried, “Alive, I have been a servant of Shu; dead, I will be one of their spirits!”

Fu Qian forced his way into the thickest of the fight. Then his steed fell, and as he was grievously wounded, he put an end to his own life.



The loyalty Fu Qian showed in stressful days
Won him a thousand autumns' noble praise;
The base Jiang Shu lived on, a life disgraced,
One would prefer the death that Fu Qian faced.

With the Yangping Pass falling into the hands of Zhong Hui were great booty of grain and weapons. He feasted the army, and that night they rested in the city of Yangan. However, the night was disturbed by sounds as of people shouting, so that Zhong Hui got up and went out thinking there must be an attack. But the sounds ceased, and he returned to his couch. However, he and his army could not sleep.

Next night, the same thing happened, shoutings in the southwest. As soon as day dawned, scouts went out to search, but they came back to say they had gone three miles and found no sign of any Shu soldier. Zhong Hui did not feel satisfied, so he took a hundred cavalymen and rode in the same direction to explore.

Presently, they happened upon a hill of sinister aspect, overhung by angry clouds, while the summit was wreathed in mist.

“What hill is that?” asked Zhong Hui, pulling up to question the guides.

“It is known as Dingjun Mountain,” was the reply. “It is where Xiahou Yuan met his death.”

This did not sound cheering at all, and Zhong Hui turned back to camp greatly depressed. Rounding the curve of a hill, he came full into a violent gust of wind, and there suddenly appeared a large body of cavalry coming down the wind as if to attack.

The whole party galloped off panic-stricken, Zhong Hui leading the way. Many generals fell from their steeds. Yet when they arrived at the pass, not a man was missing, although there were many with bruises and cuts from the falls and many had lost helmets. Everyone had seen phantom horsemen, who did no harm when they came near but melted away in the wind.

Zhong Hui called the surrendered General Jiang Shu and asked, "Is there any temple to any supernatural being on the Dingjun Mountain?"

"No," replied he, "there is nothing but the tomb of Zhuge Liang."

"Then this must have been a manifestation of Zhuge Liang," said Zhong Hui. "I ought to sacrifice to him."

So he prepared presents and slew an ox and offered sacrifice at the tomb, and when the sacrifice had been completed, the wind calmed and the dark clouds dispersed. There followed a cool breeze and a gentle shower, and the sky cleared. Pleased with the evidence of the acceptance of their offerings, the sacrificial party returned to camp.

That night, Zhong Hui fell asleep in his tent with his head resting on a small table. Suddenly, a cool breeze began to blow, and he saw a figure approaching, clad in Daoist garb, turban, feather fan, and white robe of Daoist cut bound with a black girdle. The countenance of the figure was as refined as jade, the lips a deep red and the eyes clear. The figure moved with the calm serenity of a god.

"Who are you, Sir?" asked Zhong Hui, rising.

"Out of gratitude for your kindly visit this morning, I would make a communication. Though the Hans have declined and the mandate of the Eternal cannot be disobeyed, yet the people of the west, exposed to the

inevitable miseries of war, are to be pitied. After you have passed the frontier, do not slay ruthlessly.”

Then the figure disappeared with a flick of the sleeves of its robe, nor would it stay to answer any questions.

Zhong Hui awoke and knew that he had been dreaming, but he felt that the spirit of Zhuge Liang the Martial Lord had visited him, and he was astonished.

He issued an order that the leading division of his army should bear a white flag with six words plainly written thereon, “Secure the state, comfort the people,” so that all might know that no violence was to be feared. If anyone was slain wantonly, then the offender should pay with his own life. This tender care was greatly appreciated, so that the invaders were welcomed in every step. Zhong Hui soothed the people, and they suffered no injury.



Those phantom armies circling in the gleam
Moved Zhong Hui to sacrifice at Zhuge Liang's tomb;
For the Lius had Zhuge Liang wrought unto the end,
Though dead, he would the Han people still defend.

Jiang Wei, at Tazhong, heard of the invasion and wrote to his three generals—Zhang Yi, Liao Hua, and Dong Jue—to march against the enemy, while he prepared to repulse them if they came to his station.

Soon, they came, and he went out to encounter them. Their leader was Wang Qi, Governor of Tianshui.

When near enough, Wang Qi shouted, "Our forces are numbered by millions, our generals by thousands. Two hundred thousand are marching against you, and Chengdu has already fallen. In spite of this, you do not yield, wherefore it is evident you do not recognize the divine command!"

Jiang Wei cut short this tirade by galloping out with his spear set. Wang Qi stood three bouts and then fled. Jiang Wei pursued, but seven miles away he met a cohort drawn up across the road. On the banner, he read, "Qian Hong, Governor of Longxi."

"Dead rat! No match for me," said Jiang Wei, smiling.

Despising this antagonist, he led his army straight on, and the enemy fell back. He drove them before him for three more miles and then came upon Deng Ai. A battle at once began, and the lust of battle held out in the breast of Jiang Wei for a score of bouts. But neither could overbear the other. Then, in the Shu rear arose the clang of gongs and other signs of coming foes.

Jiang Wei retired the way he had come, and presently, one came to report: "The Governor of Jincheng, Yang Xin, has destroyed the camps at Gansong."

These were evil tidings. He bade his generals keep his own standard flying and hold Deng Ai while he went to try to recover the camps. On the way he met Yang Xin, but Yang Xin had no stomach for a fight with Jiang Wei and made for the hills. Jiang Wei followed till he came to a cliff down which the enemy were hurling boulders and logs of wood so that he could not pass.

Jiang Wei turned to go back to the battlefield he had just left, but on the way he met the defeated Shu army, for Deng Ai had crushed his generals. Jiang Wei joined them but was surrounded by the Wei forces. Presently, he got clear with a sudden rush and hastened to the great camp.

Next came the news: “Zhong Hui has defeated the Yangping Pass; Jiang Shu has surrendered, while Fu Qian has fallen in the field. Hanzhong is now in the possession of Wei. Wang Han of Yuecheng and Jiang Bin of Hancheng have also opened their gates and yielded to the invaders at the loss of Hanzhong. Hu Ji has gone to Chengdu for help.”

This greatly troubled Jiang Wei, so he broke camp and set out for Hanzhong. That night, the Shu army reached the Frontier River Pass. An army under Yang Xin barred his way, and again Jiang Wei was forced to fight. He rode out in a great rage, and as Yang Xin fled, he shot at him thrice, but his arrows missed.

Throwing aside his bow, he gripped his spear and set off in pursuit, but his horse tripped and fell, and Jiang Wei lay on the ground. Yang Xin turned to slay his enemy now that he was on foot, but Jiang Wei thrust Yang Xin’s horse in the head. Other Wei troops came up rescued Yang Xin.

Mounting another steed of his follower, Jiang Wei was just setting out again in pursuit when they reported that Deng Ai was coming against his rear. Realizing that he could not cope with this new force, Jiang Wei collected his troops in order to retreat into Hanzhong.

However, the scouts reported, “Zhuge Xu, Imperial Protector of Yongzhou, is holding Yinping Bridge, our retreat path.”

So Jiang Wei halted and made a camp in the mountains. Advance and retreat seemed equally impossible.

He cried in anguish, “Heaven is destroying me!”

Then, said Ning Sui, one of his generals, “If our enemies are blocking Yinping Bridge, they can only have left a weak force in Yongzhou. We can make believe to be going thither through the Konghan Valley and so force them to abandon the bridge in order to protect the city. When the bridge is clear, you can make a dash for Saber Pass and plan for a recapture of Hanzhong.”

This plan seemed to promise success, so Jiang Wei ordered them to march into the Konghan Valley, making as though they would go to Yongzhou.

When Zhuge Xu, who was at the Yinping Bridge, heard this, he said in great shock, “Yongzhou is my own city and headquarters of the expedition. If it would be lost, I would be punished!”

So Zhuge Xu set off to its relief by the south road. He left only a small force at the bridge.

Jiang Wei marched along the north road for ten miles till he guessed that Zhuge Xu had abandoned the bridge, when he reversed his course, making the rearguard the vanguard. He dispersed the small force left at the bridgehead and burned their camp.

Zhug Xu, as he marched, saw the flames, and he turned back to the bridge, but he arrived too late. The army of Shu had already crossed, and he dared not pursue.

Soon after Jiang Wei crossed the bridge, he saw another force, but this was led by his own generals, Liao Hua and Zhang Yi.

They told him, “The Latter Ruler, firm in his faith in a wise woman, would not send help to defend the frontiers. We heard Hanzhong was threatened, and thus marched there to its rescue, but then Zhong Hui had

taken the Yangping Pass. We also heard you were surrounded here, so we came to your help.”

The two armies amalgamated and marched together.

Liao Hua said, “We are attacked all round, and the grain transportation is blocked. It seems to me wisest to retire to Saber Pass and plan other designs.”

But Jiang Wei was doubtful. Then they heard that Deng Ai and Zhong Hui were approaching in ten divisions.

Jiang Wei was disposed to stand, but Liao Hua said, “This country of White Water is laced with byroads and is too narrow and difficult to fight in with any hope of success. It would be better to retreat to the Saber Pass. If we lose that pass, all paths will be closed to us.”

At last Jiang Wei consented, and the march began. But as they neared the pass, they heard drums rolling and saw flags fluttering, which told them that the pass was held.

Hanzhong, that strong defense, is lost;

And storm clouds gather round Saber Pass.

What force was at the pass will be told in the next chapter.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXVI

CHAPTER 117

DENG AI GETS THROUGH THE YINPING MOUNTAINS; ZHUGE ZHAN FALLS ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF MIANZHU.

When Dong Jue, General Who Upholds the State, heard of the invasion of Wei in ten divisions, he brought twenty thousand troops to Saber Pass. And when the dust showed an approaching army, Dong Jue thought it wise to go to the Pass lest the coming armies should be enemies to be stopped.

But Dong Jue found that the newcomers were Jiang Wei, Liao Hua, and Zhang Yi. He let them pass through. Then he gave them the news from the capital, bad news of the deeds of both the Latter Ruler and Huang Hao. His tears fell as he told the tales.

“But do not grieve,” said Jiang Wei. “So long as I live, I will not allow Wei to come and conquer Shu. Now we must defend this pass and then evolve a strategy.”

They kept good guard at Saber Pass, while they discussed future plans.

“Though we are holding this pass, Chengdu is well-nigh empty of soldiers,” said Dong Jue. “If it were attacked, it would go crack!”

Jiang Wei replied, “The natural defenses of Chengdu are excellent: it is hard to cross over the mountains and climb the steep roads. No one needs fear.”

Soon after this, Zhuge Xu appeared at the pass challenging the defenders. Jiang Wei forthwith placed himself at the head of five thousand troops and went down to meet the Wei army. He gained an easy victory, slaying many of the enemy and taking much spoil in horses and weapons.

While Jiang Wei went back to the pass, the defeated Zhuge Xu made his way to Zhong Hui's camp, seven miles away, to confess his failure. His general was very angry.

"My orders to you were to hold Yinping Bridge so as to stop Jiang Wei, and you lost it. Now, without any orders, you attack and are defeated."

"Jiang Wei played so many deceitful tricks. He pretended to be going to take Yongzhou, and I thought that was very important, so I sent troops to rescue it. Then he meanly got away. I followed to the pass, but never thought he would come out and defeat my troops."

Zhuce Xu pleaded thus, but he was sentenced to die.

Now Wei Guan, Army Inspector, said, "Zhuge Xu is really a subordinate of Deng Ai, and, admitting that he is at fault, his punishment should not have been pronounced by you, O Commander."

But Zhong Hui swaggeringly replied, "I have a command from the Emperor and orders from the Prime Minister to attack Shu. If Deng Ai himself offended, I would behead him."

However, other leaders interceded for Zhuge Xu, and Zhong Hui did not put him to death, but sent him a caged prisoner to the capital to be judged. The surviving soldiers were added to Zhong Hui's army.

The insolent speech of Zhong Hui was duly repeated to Deng Ai, who was angry in his turn and said, "His rank and mine are the same. I have held a frontier post for years and sustained many fatigues in the country's service. Who is he that he gives himself such airs?"

His son Deng Zhong endeavored to appease his wrath. "Father, if you cannot suffer small things, you may upset the grand policy of the state.

Unfriendliness with him may do great harm, so I hope you will bear with him.”

Deng Ai saw his son was right and said no more, but he nourished anger in his heart. With a small escort, he went to call upon his colleague.

When his coming was announced, Zhong Hui asked his staff, “How many soldiers are following Deng Ai?”

“He has only some twenty horsemen,” they replied.

Zhong Hui had a large body of guards drawn up about his tent, and then gave orders that his visitor should be led in. Deng Ai dismounted, and the two men saluted each other. But the visitor did not like the look on the faces of his host’s guards. He decided to find out what Zhong Hui was thinking.

“The capture of Hanzhong is a piece of excellent fortune for the state,” said Deng Ai. “The capture of Saber Pass can now be accomplished easily.”

“What is your own idea, General?” asked Zhong Hui.

Deng Ai tried to evade answering the question, admitting he had no good suggestion. But Zhong Hui pressed him to reply.

Finally, he said, “In my simple opinion, one might proceed along byroads from the pass through the Yinping Mountains to Deyang in Hanzhong, and thence make a surprise march to Chengdu. Jiang Wei must go to its defense, and you, General, can take Saber Pass.”

“A very good plan,” said Zhong Hui. “You may start forthwith, and I will wait here till I hear news of your success.”

They drank, and Deng Ai took his leave. Zhong Hui went back to his own tent, filled with contempt for Deng Ai’s plan, which he thought impracticable.

“They say Deng Ai is able. I think he is of most ordinary capacity,” said he to his officers.

“But why?” said they.

“Because the byroads along the Yinping Mountains are impassable, nothing but lofty cliffs and steep hills. A hundred defenders at a critical point could cut all communications, and Deng Ai’s army would starve to death. I shall go by the direct road, and there is no fear about the result. I shall overcome Shu.”

So he prepared scaling ladders and stone-throwing machines and set himself to besiege Saber Pass.

Deng Ai went out to the main gate of the court. While mounting, he said to his followers, “What did Zhong Hui think of me?”

“He looked as though he held a poor opinion of what you had said, General, and disagreed with you, although his words were fair enough.”

“He thinks I cannot take Chengdu. So I shall take it!”

He was received at his own camp by Shi Zuan and his son Deng Zhong, and a party of others of his generals, and they asked what the conversation had been about.

“I told Zhong Hui simple truth, but he thinks I am just a common person of no ability to speak of. He regards the capture of Hanzhong as an incomparable feat of arms. Where would he have been if I had not held up Jiang Wei at Tazhong? But I think the capture of Chengdu will beat that of Hanzhong.”

That night, the camp was broken up, and Deng Ai set his army out upon a long march along the mountainous paths. At twenty miles from Saber Pass, they made a camp. The scouts told Zhong Hui of his movement, and Zhong Hui laughed at the attempt.

From his camp, Deng Ai sent a letter to Sima Zhao.

Then he called his officers to his tent and asked them, "I am going to make a dash for Chengdu while it is still undefended, and success will mean unfading glory for us all. Will you follow me?"

"We will follow you and obey your orders," cried they all.

So the final dispositions were made. Deng Zhong and three thousand troops went first to improve the road. His troops wore no armor, but they had axes and boring tools. They were to level roads and build bridges.

Next went thirty thousand troops furnished with dry grain and ropes. At every one hundred miles, they were to make a post of three thousand.

In autumn of that year, they left Yinping, and in the tenth month they were in most precipitous country of the Yinping Mountains. They had taken twenty days to travel two hundred and fifty miles. They were in an uninhabited country. After garrisoning the various posts on the way, they had only two thousand soldiers left. Before them stood a range named Heaven Cliffs, which no horse could ascend. Deng Ai climbed up on foot to see his son and the troops with him opening up a road. They were exhausted with fatigue and weeping.

Deng Ai asked why they were so sad, and his son replied, "We have found an impassable precipice away to the northwest which we cannot get through. All our labor has been in vain."

Deng Ai said, "We have gone over two hundred and fifty miles, and just beyond is Jiangyou. We cannot go back. How can one get tiger cubs except by going into tiger caves? Here we are, and it will be a very great feat to capture Chengdu."

They all said they would go on. So they came to the precipice. First, they threw over their weapons; then, the leader wrapped himself in blankets

and rolled over the edge; next, the generals followed him, also wrapped in blankets. Those who had not blankets were let down by cords round the waist, and others clinging to trees followed one after another till all had descended and the Heaven Cliffs were passed. Then they retook their armor and weapons and went on their way.

They came across a stone by the roadside. It bore a mysterious inscription; translated literally, it read:

“This stone is a message of Zhuge Liang the Prime Minister: Two fires were just founded; armies pass by here. Two soldiers compete; both soon die.”

Deng Ai was astonished. Presently, he bowed before the stone and prayed to the spirit of Zhuge Liang.

“O Martial Lord, immortal! I grieve that I am not thy worthy disciple.”



The rugged lofty mountain peaks
Of Yinping, pierce the sky,
The somber crane with wearied wing
Can scarcely over them fly.
Intrepid Deng Ai in blankets wrapped
Rolled down the craggy steep,
His feat Zhuge Liang prophesied
By insight wondrous deep.



Having crossed this great range of mountains without discovery, Deng Ai marched forward. Presently, he came to a roomy camp, empty and deserted. He was told that while Zhuge Liang lived, a thousand troops had been kept in garrison at this point of danger, but the Latter Ruler had withdrawn them. Deng Ai sighed at the thought.

He said to his troops, "Now retreat is impossible; there is no road back. Before you lies Jiangyou with stores in abundance. Advance and you live; retreat and you die. You must fight with all your strength."

"We will fight to the death!" they cried.

The leader was now afoot, doing double marches with his two thousand troops toward Jiangyou.

The Commander at Jiangyou was Ma Miao. He heard the East River Land had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Though some things were prepared for defense, his post had a wide area to cover and guard, and he trusted Jiang Wei would defend the Saber Pass. So he did not take his military duties very seriously, just maintaining the daily drills and then going home to his wife to cuddle up to the stove and drink.

His wife was of the Li family. When she heard of the state of things on the frontier, she said to her husband, "If there is so great danger on the borders, how is it you are so unaffected?"

"The affair is in Jiang Wei's hands, and is not my concern," replied he.

"Nevertheless, you finally have to guard the capital, and that is a heavy responsibility."

"Oh, well! The Emperor trusts his favorite Huang Hao entirely and is sunk in vice and pleasure. Disaster is very near. If the Wei armies get here, I

shall yield. It is no good taking it seriously.”

“You call yourself a man! Have you such a disloyal and treacherous heart? Is it nothing to have held office and taken pay for years? How can I bear to look upon your face?”

Ma Miao was too ashamed to attempt to reply. Just then, his house servants came to tell him that Deng Ai, with his two thousand troops, had found their way along some road and had already broken into the city. Ma Miao was now frightened and hastily went out to find the leader and offer his formal submission.

He went to the Town Hall and bowed on the steps, crying, “I have long desired to come over to Wei. Now I yield myself and my army and all the town.”

Deng Ai accepted his surrender and incorporated his army with his own force. He took Ma Miao into his service as guide.

Then came a servant with the news: “Lady Li has hanged herself!”

Deng Ai asked why she had done it, and Ma Miao told him. Deng Ai, admiring her rectitude, gave orders for an honorable burial. He also went in person to sacrifice. Everyone extolled her conduct.



When the Ruler of Shu had wandered from the way,
And the House of Han fell lower,
Heaven sent Deng Ai to smite the land.
Then did a woman show herself most noble,
So noble in conduct,
That no leader equaled her.



As soon as Jiangyou was taken, the posts along the road by which the army had come were withdrawn, and there was a general rendezvous at this point. This done, they marched toward Fucheng.

General Tian Xu remonstrated, saying, "We have just finished a long and perilous march and are weary and worn out. We ought to repose for a few days to recover."

Deng Ai angrily replied, "Speed is the one important matter in war. Do not encourage any discontent. I will not have it."

Tian Xu was sentenced to death. But as many officers interceded for him, he was pardoned.

The army pressed on toward Fucheng. As soon as they arrived, the officers yielded as if they thought Deng Ai had fallen from the heavens. Some took the news to the capital, and the Latter Ruler began to feel alarmed. He hastily called for Huang Hao, who at once denied the report.

"That is just false rumor. The spirits would not deceive Your Majesty," said Huang Hao.

The Latter Ruler summoned the wise woman to the Palace, but the messengers said she had gone no one knew whither.

And now urgent memorials and letters fell in from every side like a snowstorm, and messengers went to and fro in constant streams. The Latter Ruler called a court to discuss the danger, but no one had any plan or suggestion to offer. The courtiers just looked blankly into each other's faces.

Finally, Xi Zheng spoke out, “In this extremeness, Your Majesty should call in the help of the son of the Martial Lord.”

This son of Zhuge Liang was named Zhuge Zhan. His mother was born of the Huang family and a daughter of Huang Chenyan. She was singularly plain and extraordinarily talented. She had studied everything, even books of strategy and magic. Zhuge Liang, in Nanyang, had sought to marry her because of her goodness, and she had studied with him for all their lives. She had survived her husband but a short time, and her last words to her son had been “be loyal and filial”.

Zhuge Zhan had been known as a clever lad and had married a daughter of the Latter Ruler, so that he was an Imperial Son-in-Law. His father’s rank, Lord of Wuxiang, had descended to him. In the fourth year of Wonderful Sight (AD 261), Zhuge Zhan received the rank of General of the Guard, as well. But he had retired when Huang Hao, the eunuch, as first favorite, began to direct state affairs.

As suggested, the Latter Ruler summoned Zhuge Zhan to court, and he said, weeping, “Deng Ai has conquered Fucheng, and the capital is seriously threatened. You must think of your father and rescue me!”

“My father and I owe too much to the First Ruler’s and Your Majesty’s kindness for me to think any sacrifice too great to make for Your Majesty. I pray that you give me command of the troops in the capital, and I will fight a decisive battle.”

So the soldiers, seventy thousand, were placed under Zhuge Zhan’s command.

When he had gathered all together, he said, “Who dares be Leader of the Van?”

His son, Zhuge Shang, then nineteen, offered himself, saying, "Since my father commands the army, I volunteer to lead the van!"

Zhuce Shang had studied military books and made himself an adept in the various exercises. So he was appointed, and the army marched to find the enemy.

In the meantime, the surrendered general, Ma Miao, had given Deng Ai a very complete map of the country showing the whole sixty miles of road to Chengdu. However, Deng Ai was dismayed when he saw the difficulties ahead of him.

"If they defend the hills in front, I shall fail, for if I am delayed, Jiang Wei will come up, and my army will be in great danger. The army must press on."

He called Shi Zuan and his son Deng Zhong and said, "Lead one army straight to Mianzhu to keep back any Shu soldiers sent to stop our march. I will follow as soon as I can. But hasten, for if you let the enemy forestall you, I will put you to death."

They went. Nearing Mianzhu, they met the army under Zhuge Zhan. Both sides prepared for battle. The Shu armies adopted the Eight Diagrams formation, and presently, after the usual triple roll of drums, Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong saw their opponents' ranks open in the center, and therefrom emerge a light carriage in which sat a figure looking exactly as Zhuge Liang used to look when he appeared on the battlefield. Everybody knew the Daoist robes and the feather fan. The standard bore his name and titles "The Han Prime Minister Zhuge Liang."

The sight was too much for Deng Zhong and Shi Zuan. The cold sweat of terror poured down them, and they stammered out, "If Zhuge Liang is still alive, that is the end of us!"

They led their army to flee. The troops of Shu came on, and the army of Wei was driven away in defeat and chased a distance of seven miles. Then the pursuers sighted Deng Ai, and they turned and retired.

When Deng Ai had camped, he called the two leaders before him and reproached them for retreating without fighting.

"We saw Zhuge Liang leading the enemy," said Deng Zhong, "so we ran away."

"Why should we fear, even if they bring Zhuge Liang to life again? You ran away without cause, and we have lost. You ought both to be put to death."

However, they did not die, for their fellows pleaded for them, and Deng Ai's wrath was mollified.

Then, the scouts came in to say, "The leader of the army is a son of Zhuge Liang, Zhuge Zhan. The Van Leader is Zhuge Zhan's son, Zhuge Shang. They had set up on the carriage the old, wooden image of the late strategist."

Deng Ai, however, said to Deng Zhong and Shi Zuan, "This is the critical stage. If you lose the next battle, you will certainly lose your lives with it!"

At the head of ten thousand troops, they went out to battle once more. This time, they met the vanguard led by Zhuge Shang, who rode out alone, boldly offering to repulse the leaders of Wei. At Zhuge Zhan's signal, the two wings advanced and threw themselves against the Wei line. The center portion of the Wei line met them, and the battle went to and fro many times,

till at length the force of Wei, after great losses, had to give way. Both Deng Zhong and Shi Zuan being badly wounded, they fled, and the army of Shu pursued and drove the invaders into their camp.

Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong had to acknowledge a new defeat, but when Deng Ai saw both were severely wounded, he forbore to blame them or decree any penalty.

To his officers, Deng Ai said, “This Zhuge Zhan well continues the paternal tradition. Twice they have beaten us and slain great numbers. We must defeat them, and that quickly, or we are lost.”

Then Military Inspector Qiu Ben said, “Why not persuade their leader with a letter?”

Deng Ai agreed and wrote a letter, which he sent by the hand of a messenger. The warden of the Shu camp gate led the messenger in to see Zhuge Zhan, who opened the letter and read:

“Deng Ai, General Who Conquers the West, writes to Zhuge Zhan, General of the Guard and leader of the army in the field.

“Now, having carefully observed all the talents of the time, I see not one of them is equal to your most honored father. From the moment of his emergence from his retreat, he said that the country was to be in tripod division. He conquered Jingzhou and Yizhou and Hanzhong and thus established a position. Few have been his equal in all history. He made six expeditions from Qishan, and, if he failed, it was not that he lacked skill—it was the will of Heaven.

“But now this Latter Ruler is dull and weak, and his kingly aura is already exhausted. I have a command from the Son of Heaven to smite Shu with severity, and I already possess the land. Your capital must

quickly fall. Why, then, do you not bow to the will of Heaven and fall in with the desires of people by acting rightly and coming over to our side? I will obtain the rank of Prince of Langye for you, whereby your ancestors will be rendered illustrious. These are no vain words if, happily, you will consider them.”

The letter made Zhuge Zhan furiously angry. He tore it to fragments and ordered the bearer thereof to be put to death immediately. He also ordered the escort to bear the head of the messenger to the camp of Wei and lay it before Deng Ai.

Deng Ai was very angry at this insult and wished to go forth at once to battle. But Qiu Ben dissuaded him.

“Do not go out to battle,” said he. “Rather, overcome him by some unexpected stroke.”

So Deng Ai laid his plans. He sent Wang Qi, Governor of Tianshui, and Qian Hong, Governor of Longxi, to lie in wait in the rear while he led the main body.

Zhugé Zhān happened to be close at hand, seeking battle. When he heard the enemy was near, he led out his army eagerly and rushed into the midst of the invaders. Then, Deng Ai fled as though worsted, so luring on Zhuge Zhan. But when the pursuit had lasted some time, the pursuers were attacked by those who lay in wait, and the Shu troops were defeated. They ran away into Mianzhu.

Therefore, Deng Ai besieged Mianzhu, and the troops of Wei shouted about the city and watched the ramparts, thus keeping the defenders close-

shut in as if held in an iron barrel.

Zhuge Zhan was desperate, seeing no way of escape without help from outside. Wherefore he wrote a letter to East Wu begging for assistance, and he gave this letter to Peng He to bear through the besiegers.

Peng He fought his way through and reached Wu, where he saw the Ruler of Wu, Sun Xiu. And he presented the letter showing the wretched plight of Zhuge Zhan and his urgent need.

Then the Ruler of Wu assembled his officers and said to them, “The land of Shu being in danger, I cannot sit and look on unconcerned.”

He therefore decided to send fifty thousand troops, over whom he set the Veteran General Ding Feng, with two able assistants, Sun Yin and Ding Fung. Having received his edict, Ding Feng sent away his commanders with twenty thousand troops to Mianzhu, and he himself went with thirty thousand troops toward Shouchun. The army marched in three divisions.

In the city of Mianzhu, Zhuge Zhan waited for the rescue which never came.

Weary of the hopeless delay, he said to his generals, “This long defense is useless. I will fight!”

Leaving his son Zhuge Shang and Chair of the Secretariat Zhang Zun—Zhang Fei’s grandson—in the city, Zhuge Zhan put on his armor and led out three thousand troops through three gates to fight in the open.

Seeing the defenders making a sortie, Deng Ai drew off and Zhuge Zhan pursued him vigorously, thinking Deng Ai really fled before his force. But there was an ambush, and falling therein, he was quickly surrounded as is the kernel of a nut by the shell. In vain he thrust right and shoved left; he

only lost his troops in the raining arrows and bolts. The troops of Wei poured in more flights of arrows, so that his army was all shattered. Before long, Zhuge Zhan was wounded and fell.

“I am done,” cried he. “But in my death, I will do my duty!” He drew his sword and slew himself.

From the city walls, his son Zhuge Shang saw the death of his father. Girding on his armor, he made to go out to fight.

But Zhang Zun told him, “Young general, do not go out immediately!”

Cried Zhuge Shang, “My father and I and all our family have received favors from the state. My father has died in battle against our enemies, and can I live?”

He whipped his horse and dashed out into the thick of the fight, where he died.



A poem has been written extolling the conduct of both father and son:

In skill he was found wanting, not in loyalty,
But the Lord's word had gone forth,
That the Ruler of Shu was to be cut off.
Noble were Zhuge Liang's descendants.



In commiseration of their loyalty, Deng Ai had both father and son buried fittingly. Then he began attacking the city vigorously. Zhang Zun, Huang Chong, and Li Qiu, the defenders, however, held the city desperately, but to no avail for their numbers' being small, and the three leaders were slain.

This was the end of the defense, and Deng Ai then entered as conqueror. Having rewarded his army, he set out for Chengdu.

The closing days of the Latter Ruler were
As had been those of Liu Zhang.

The next chapter will tell of the defense of Chengdu.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXVI

CHAPTER 118

WEeping AT THE ANCESTRAL TEMPLE, A FILIAL PRINCE DIES;
MARCHING TO THE WEST RIVER LAND, TWO LEADERS COMPETE.

The news of the fall of Mianzhu and the deaths in battle of Zhuge Zhan and Zhuge Shang, father and son, brought home to the Latter Ruler that danger was very near, and he summoned a council.

Then the officials said, "Panic has seized upon the people, and they are leaving the city in crowds. Their cries shake the very sky!"

Sorely he felt his helplessness. Soon, they reported the enemy were actually near the city, and many courtiers advised flight.

"We do not have enough troops to protect the capital. Leave the city and flee south to the seven counties of Nanzhong," said they. "The country is difficult and easily defended. We can get the Mans to come and help us."

But Minister Qiao Zhou opposed, saying, "No, no, that will not do. The Mans are old rebels. To go to them would be a calamity."

Then some proposed seeking refuge in Wu: "The people of Wu are our sworn allies, and this is a moment of extreme danger. Let us go thither."

But Qiao Zhou also opposed this, saying, "In the whole course of past ages, no emperor has ever gone to another state. So far as I can see, Wei will presently absorb Wu, and certainly Wu will never overcome Wei. Imagine the disgrace of becoming a minister of Wu and then having to style yourself minister of Wei. It would double the mortification. Do neither. Surrender to Wei, and Wei will give Your Majesty a strip of land where the

ancestral temple can be preserved, and the people will be saved from suffering. I desire Your Majesty to reflect well upon this.”

The distracted Latter Ruler retired from the council without having come to any decision. Next day, confusion had become still worse. Qiao Zhou saw that matters were very urgent and presented a written memorial. The Latter Ruler accepted it and decided to yield.

But from behind a screen stepped out the fifth of the Emperor’s sons, Liu Chen, Prince of Beidi.

Liu Chen shouted at Qiao Zhou, “You corrupt pedant, unfit to live among people! How dare you offer such mad advice in a matter concerning the existence of a dynasty? Has any emperor ever yielded to the enemy?”

The Latter Ruler had seven sons in all—Liu Rui, Liu Dao, Liu Zhong, Liu Zan, Liu Chen, Liu Xue, and Liu Ju. But the ablest, and the only one above the common level of people, was this Liu Chen.

The Latter Ruler turned feebly to his son and said, “The ministers have decided otherwise: they advise surrender. You are the only one who thinks that boldness may avail, and would you drench the city in blood?”

The Prince said, “While the First Ruler lived, this Qiao Zhou had no voice in state affairs. Now, he gives this wild advice and talks the most subversive language. There is no reason at all in what he says, for we have in the city many legions of soldiers, and Jiang Wei is undefeated in Saber Pass. He will come to our rescue as soon as he knows our straits, and we can help him to fight. We shall surely succeed. Why listen to the words of this dryasdust? Why abandon thus lightly the work of our great forerunner?”

The Latter Ruler became angry at this harangue and turned to his son, saying, “Be silent! You are too young to understand Heaven’s will!”

Liu Chen beat his head upon the ground and implored his father to make an effort. “If we have done our best and defeat yet comes, if parents and children, lords and ministers have set their backs to the wall and died in one final effort to preserve the dynasty, then in the shades of the Nine Golden Springs we shall be able to look the First Ruler in the face, unashamed. But what if we surrender?”

The appeal left the Latter Ruler unmoved.

The Prince cried, “Is it not shameful in one day to throw down all that our ancestors built up with so great labor? I would rather die.”

The Latter Ruler, now very angry, bade the courtiers thrust the young man out of the Palace. Then he ordered Qiao Zhou to prepare the formal Act of Surrender. After it had been written, three officers—Adviser Zhang Shao, Imperial Son-in-Law and Commander Deng Liang, and Minister Qiao Zhou—were sent with it and the Hereditary Seal to the camp of Deng Ai to offer submission.

Every day, Deng Ai’s horsemen rode to the city to see what was afoot. It was a glad day when they returned reporting the hoisting of the flag of surrender.

The general had not long to wait. The three messengers soon arrived and presented the letter announcing surrender and the seal therewith. Deng Ai read the letter with great exultation, and took possession of the seal. He treated the envoys courteously, and by their hands sent back a letter to allay any anxiety among the people. In due time, they reentered the city and bore this missive to the Latter Ruler, and they told him they had been treated

well. The Latter Ruler read the letter with much satisfaction. Then he sent Minister Jiang Xian to order Jiang Wei to surrender.

Then Li Hu, Chair of the Secretariat, carried to the victorious Deng Ai the statistical documents of the resources of the kingdom:

2,800,000 households, 9,140,000 souls, 102,000 active armed soldiers of all ranks, and 40,000 civil employees. Besides, there are granaries with 4,000,000 carts of grain, treasuries with 3,000 pounds of gold and silver and 200,000 rolls of silks of many qualities, and many unenumerated but precious things in the various storehouses.

Li Hu arranged that the ceremony of surrender should take place on the first day of the twelfth month.

The wrath of Prince Liu Chen swelled high as Heaven when he heard that his father had actually arranged the date of his abdication.

Girding on his sword, he was setting out for the Palace when his Consort, Lady Cui, stopped him, saying, “My Prince, why does your face bear this look of terrible anger?”

He replied, “The army of Wei is at the gates, and my father has made his Act of Surrender. Tomorrow, he and all his ministers are going out of the city to submit formally, and the dynasty will end. But rather than bow the knee to another, I will die and go into the presence of the First Ruler in the realms below.”

“How worthy; how worthy!” replied she. “And if my lord must die, I, thy handmaid, prays that she may die first. Then may my Prince depart.”

“But why should you die?”

“The Prince dies for his father and the handmaid for her husband. One eternal principle guides us all.”

Thereupon, she dashed herself against a pillar, and so she died. Then Liu Chen slew his three sons and cut off the head of his Consort that he might sever all ties to life lest he be tempted to live. Bearing the head of the princess in his hand, he went to the Temple of the First Ruler, where he bowed his head, saying, “Thy servant is ashamed at seeing the kingdom pass to another. Therefore, has he slain his Consort and his sons that nothing should induce him to live and forego death.”

This announcement recited, he made yet another to his ancestors.

“My ancestors, if you have spiritual intelligence, you know the feelings of your descendant.”

Then he wept sore till his eyes ran blood, and he committed suicide. The people of Shu grieved deeply for him.



A poet has praised his noble deed:

Both king and courtiers, willing, bowed the knee,
One son alone was grieved and would not live.
The western kingdom fell to rise no more,
A noble prince stood forth, for aye renowned
As one who died to save his forebears' shame.
With grievous mien and falling tears he bowed
His head, declaring his intent to die.
While such a memory lingers none may say
That the Han Dynasty has perished.



When the Latter Ruler knew of the death of his son, he sent people to bury him.

Soon, the main body of the Wei army came. The Latter Ruler and all his courtiers, to the number of sixty, went out three miles from the north gate to bow their heads in submission, the Latter Ruler binding himself with cord and taking a coffin with him. But Deng Ai with his own hands loosened the bonds and raised the Latter Ruler from the ground. The coffin was burned. Then, the victorious leader and the vanquished Emperor returned into the city side by side.



Wei's legions entered Shu,
And the ruler thereof saved his life
At the price of his honor and his throne.
Huang Hao's vicious counsels had brought disaster
Against which Jiang Wei's efforts were vain.
How bright shone the loyalty of the faithful one!
How noble was the grandson of the First Ruler!
Alas! It led him into the way of sorrow.
And the plans of the First Ruler,
Excellent and far-reaching,
Whereby he laid the foundations of a mighty state,
Were brought to nought in one day.



The common people rejoiced at the magnanimity of Deng Ai, and met the returning cavalcade with burning incense and flowers. The title of General of the Flying Cavalry was given to the Latter Ruler, and other ranks were given to the ministers who had surrendered.

Deng Ai requested the Latter Ruler to issue one more proclamation from the Palace to reassure the people, and then the conquerors took formal possession of the state and its granaries and storehouses. Two officers, Governor of Yizhou Zhang Shao and Minister Zhang Jun, were sent into the counties and territories to explain the new situation and pacify malcontents, and another messenger was sent to exhort Jiang Wei to yield peaceably. A report of the success was sent to Capital Luoyang.

Huang Hao, the eunuch whose evil counsels had wrought such ruin to his master, was looked upon as a danger, and Deng Ai decided to put him to death. However, Huang Hao was rich, and he gave bribes to Deng Ai's people, and so he escaped the death penalty.



Thus perished the House of Han. Reflecting on its end, a poet recalled the exploits of Zhuge Liang the Martial Lord, and he wrote a poem:

The denizens of treetops, apes and birds,
Most lawless of crested things, yet knew
And feared his mordant pen. The clouds and winds
Conspired to aid him to defend his lord.
But nought awaited the leader's precepts, wise
To save; with base content the erstwhile king

Too soon surrendered, yielding all but life.
In gifts Zhuge Liang was peer with
Guan Zhong and Yue Yi,
His hapless death compared with
Zhang Fei's and Guan Yu's;
Sad sight, his temple on the river's brink!
It wrings the heart more than the tearful verse
Of the Liangfu songs he most loved.

In due time, Minister Jiang Xian reached the Saber Pass and gave Jiang Wei the Latter Ruler's command to surrender to the invaders. Jiang Wei was dumb with amazement at the order; his officers ground their teeth with rage and mortification. Their hair stood on end with anger; they drew their swords and slashed at stones in their wrath.

Shouted they, "While we are fighting to our death, the Latter Ruler has yielded!"

The roar of their angry lamentation was heard for miles.

But Jiang Wei soothed them with kindly words, saying, "Generals, grieve not. Even yet, I can restore the House of Han!"

"How?" cried they.

And he whispered low in their ears.

The flag of surrender fluttered over the ramparts of Saber Pass, and a messenger went to Zhong Hui's camp. When Jiang Wei and his generals

drew near, Zhong Hui went out to meet them.

“Why have you been so long in coming?” said Zhong Hui.

Jiang Wei looked him straight in the face and said, without a tremor, but through falling tears, “The whole armies of the state are under me, and I am here far too soon!”

Zhong Hui wondered about this firm remark and said nothing more. The two saluted each other and took their seats, Jiang Wei being placed in the seat of honor.

Jiang Wei said, “I hear that every detail of your plans, from the time you left the South of River Huai till now, has been accomplished. The good fortune of the Sima family is owing to you, and so I am the more content to bow my head and yield to you. Had it been Deng Ai, I should have fought to the death, for I would not have surrendered to him!”

Then Zhong Hui broke an arrow in twain, and they two swore close brotherhood. Their friendship became close-knit. Jiang Wei was continued in command of his own army, at which he secretly rejoiced. He sent Jiang Xian back to Chengdu.

As conqueror, Deng Ai arranged for the administration of the newly-gained territory. He made Shi Zuan Imperial Protector of Yizhou and appointed Qian Hong, Yang Xin, and many others to various posts. He also built a tower in Mianzhu in commemoration of his conquest.

At a great banquet, where most of the guests were people of the newly-conquered land, Deng Ai drank too freely and in his cups became garrulous.

With a patronizing wave of his hand, he said to his guests, “You are lucky in that you have had to do with me. Things might well have been

otherwise, and you might all have been put to death, if you surrendered to another leader!”

The guests rose in a body and expressed their gratitude. Just at that moment, Jiang Xian arrived from his visit to Jiang Wei to say that Jiang Wei and his army had surrendered to Zhong Hui. Deng Ai thereupon conceived a great hatred for Zhong Hui, and soon after he wrote to Luoyang a letter, something like this:

“I would venture to remark that misleading rumors of war should precede actual attack. Now that Shu has been overcome, the manifest next move is against Wu, and in present circumstances, victory would easily follow an attack. But after a great effort, both leaders and led are weary and unfit for immediate service. Therefore, of this army, twenty thousand Wei troops should be left west of Longyou, and with them, twenty thousand Shu troops, to be employed in boiling salt so as to improve the finances. Moreover, ships should be built ready for an expedition down the river. When these preparations shall be complete, then send an envoy into Wu to lay before its ruler the truth about its position. It is possible that matters may be settled without any fighting.

“Further, generous treatment of Liu Shan will tend to weaken Sun Xiu, but if Liu Shan be removed to Luoyang, the people of Wu will be perplexed and doubtful about what may happen to them, and they will not be amenable. Therefore, it seems most fitting to leave the late Ruler of Shu here. Next year, in the winter season, he might be removed to the capital. For the present, I would recommend that he be created Prince of Fufeng and granted a sufficient revenue and suitable attendants. His sons also should receive ducal rank. In this way would be demonstrated that favorable treatment follows upon submission.

Such a course would inspire fear of the might of Wei and respect for its virtue, and the result will be all that could be desired.”

Reading this memorial, the thought entered the mind of Sima Zhao that Deng Ai was exaggerating his own importance, wherefore he first wrote a private letter and sent it by the hand of Wei Guan to Deng Ai and then caused the Ruler of Wei to issue an edict promoting Deng Ai. The edict ran thus:

“General Deng Ai has performed a glorious exploit, penetrating deeply into a hostile country and reducing to submission a usurping potentate. This task has been quickly performed: the clouds of war have already rolled away, and peace reigns throughout Ba and Shu.

“The merits of Deng Ai surpass those of Bai Qi, who subdued the mighty state of Chu, and Han Xin, who conquered the state of Zhao. Deng Ai is created Grand Commander, and we confer upon him a fief of twenty thousand homesteads, and his two sons are ennobled, each with a fief of one thousand homesteads.”

After the edict had been received with full ceremonies, Wei Guan produced the private letter, which said that Deng Ai’s proposals would have suitable consideration in due time.

Then, said Deng Ai, “A general in the field may decline to obey even the orders of his prince. My commission was to conquer the west. Why are my plans hindered?”

So he wrote a reply and sent it to the capital by the hand of the envoy. At that time, it was common talk at court that Deng Ai intended to rebel,

and when Sima Zhao read the letter, his suspicions turned to certainty, and he feared. This was the letter:

“Deng Ai, General Who Conquers the West, has reduced the chief of the revolt to submission and must have authority to act according as he sees best in order to settle the early stages of administration of the new territory. To await government orders for every step means long delays. According to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, a high officer, when abroad, has authority to follow his own judgment for the safety of the Throne and the advantage of the state.

“Now seeing that Wu is still unsubdued, all interest centers upon this country, and schemes of settlement should not be nullified by strict adherence to rules and formalities. In war, advances are made without thought of reputation, retreats without consideration of avoiding punishment. Though I do not possess the fortitude of the ancients, I shall not be deterred from acting for the benefit of the state by craven and selfish fears for my own reputation.”

In his perplexity, Sima Zhao turned to Jia Chong for advice. Said he, “Deng Ai presumes upon his services to be haughty and imperious. His recalcitrance is very evident. What shall I do?”

“Why not order Zhong Hui to reduce him to obedience?” replied Jia Chong.

Sima Zhao accepted the suggestion and issued an edict raising Zhong Hui to Minister of the Interior. After this, he made Wei Guan the Inspector of the Forces and set Wei Guan over both armies, with special orders to keep a watch upon Deng Ai and guard against any attempt at insubordination.

The edict sent to Zhong Hui ran as follows:

“Zhong Hui, General Who Conquers the West, against whose might none can stand, before whom no one is strong, whose virtue conquers every city, whose wide net no one escapes, to whom the valiant army of Shu humbly submitted, whose plans never fail, whose every undertaking succeeds, is hereby made Minister of the Interior and raised to the rank of lordship of a fief of ten thousand families. His two sons also have similar rank with a fief of one thousand families.”

When this edict reached Zhong Hui, he called in Jiang Wei and said to him, “Deng Ai has been rewarded more richly than I and is the Grand Commander. But Sima Zhao suspects him of rebellion and has ordered Wei Guan and myself to keep him in order. What does my friend Jiang Wei think ought to be done?”

Jiang Wei replied, “They say Deng Ai’s origin was ignoble and in his youth he was a farmer and breeder of cattle. However, he had good luck and has won a great reputation in this expedition. But this is due not to his able plans but to the good fortune of the state. If you had not been compelled to hold me in check at Saber Pass, he could not have succeeded. Now he wishes the late Ruler of Shu to be created Prince of Fufeng, whereby he hopes to win the goodwill of the people of Shu. But to me, it seems that perfidy lies therein. The Duke of Jin suspects him, it is evident.”

Zhong Hui complimented him. Jiang Wei continued, “If you will send away your people, I have something to say to you in private.”

When this had been done and they two were alone, Jiang Wei drew a map from his sleeve and spread it before Zhong Hui, saying, “Long ago, before he had left his humble cot, Zhuge Liang gave this to the First Ruler and told him of the riches of Yizhou and how well it was fitted for an

independent state. Whereupon, Chengdu was seized as a first step towards attaining it. Now that Deng Ai has got to the same point, it is small wonder that he has lost his balance.”

Zhong Hui asked many questions about the details of the features of the map, and Jiang Wei explained in full. Toward the end, he asked how Deng Ai could be got rid of.

“By making use of the Duke of Jin’s suspicions,” replied Jiang Wei. “Send up a memorial to say that it looks as if Deng Ai really contemplated rebellion. You will receive direct orders to check the revolt.”

So a memorial was sent to Luoyang. It said that Deng Ai aimed at independence, nourished base designs, was making friends with the vanquished, and was about to revolt.

At this news, the court was much disturbed. Then, to support his charges, Zhong Hui’s soldiers intercepted Deng Ai’s letters and rewrote them in arrogant and rebellious terms. Sima Zhao was greatly angered and sent Jia Chong to lead an expedition into the Xie Valley, he ordered Zhong Hui to arrest Deng Ai, and he himself directed a great march under the leadership of the Ruler of Wei, Cao Huang, whom he compelled to go with him.

Then said Shao Ti, “Zhong Hui’s army outnumbered that of Deng Ai by six to one. You need not go. You need only order Zhong Hui to arrest Deng Ai.”

“Have you forgotten?” said Sima Zhao, smiling. “You said Zhong Hui was a danger. I am not really going against Deng Ai, but against the other.”

“I feared lest you had forgotten,” said Shao Ti. “I ventured to remind you, but the matter must be kept secret.”

The expedition set out.

By this time Zhong Hui's attitude had aroused Jia Chong's suspicions, and he spoke of it to Sima Zhao, who replied, "I have sent you; should I have doubts about you, too? However, come to Changan and things will clear up."

The dispatch of the army under Sima Zhao was reported to Zhong Hui, who wondered what it might mean. He at once called in Jiang Wei to consult about the seizure of Deng Ai.

Lo! He is victor here, a king must yield;
And there a threatening army takes the field.

The next chapter will relate the plan to arrest Deng Ai.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXVI

CHAPTER 119

THE FALSE SURRENDER: A WITTY SCHEME BECOMES A VAIN PLAN;
THE ABDICATION: LATER SEEDS LEARN FROM THE ANCIENT.

Asked to say what was the best plan to secure the arrest of Deng Ai, Jiang Wei said, "Send Wei Guan. If Deng Ai tries to kill Wei Guan, he will manifest the desire of his heart. Then you can destroy him as a traitor."

Hence, Wei Guan was sent, with some thirty men, to effect the arrest.

Wei Guan's own people saw the danger of the enterprise and urged him not to go, saying, "Zhong Hui clearly wants Deng Ai to kill you to prove his point!"

But Wei Guan said, "Do not worry. I have a scheme prepared."

Wei Guan first wrote a score or two of letters, all in the same terms, saying:

"Wei Guan has orders to arrest Deng Ai, but no other persons will be dealt with, providing they submit quickly. Rewards await those who obey the Imperial Command. However, the punishment for laggards and those who are contumacious will be death to the whole family."

Wei Guan sent these letters to various officers who were serving under Deng Ai. He also prepared two cage carts.

Wei Guan and his small party reached Chengdu about cockcrow and found waiting for him most of the officers to whom he had written. They at

once yielded. Deng Ai was still asleep when the party reached his palace, but Wei Guan entered and forced his way into Deng Ai's chamber.

He roared out: "I serve the Son of Heaven's command to arrest Deng Ai and his son!"

The noise awakened the sleeper, who tumbled off his couch in alarm. But before Deng Ai could do anything to defend himself, he was seized, securely bound, and huddled into one of the carts. Deng Ai's son, Deng Zhong, rushed in at the noise, but was also made prisoner and thrust into the other cart. Many generals and attendants in the Palace wanted to attempt a rescue, but before they had prepared, they saw dust arose outside, and Zhong Hui with an army was close at hand, thus they scattered.

Zhong Hui and Jiang Wei dismounted at the Palace gates and entered.

Zhong Hui, seeing both the Dengs prisoners, struck the elder about the head and face with his whip and insulted him, saying, "Vile cattle breeder! How dare you have your own scheme?"

Nor was Jiang Wei backward. "You fool! See what your good luck has brought you today!" cried he.

And Deng Ai replied in kind. Zhong Hui at once sent off both the prisoners to Luoyang, and then entered Chengdu in state. He added all Deng Ai's army to his own forces, so that he became very formidable.

"Today I have attained the one desire of my life!" cried Zhong Hui.

Jiang Wei replied, "At the beginning of Han, Han Xin hearkened not to Kuai Tong to establish his own kingdom, and so blundered into trouble at the Weiyang Palace, where he met his fate. In Yue, High Minister Wen Zhong would not follow Fan Li into retirement on the lakes, and so fell victim to a sword. No one would say these two—Han Xin and Wen Zhong—were not brilliant, but they did not scent danger early enough.

“Now, Sir, your merit is great and your prestige overwhelming that of your prince, but why do you risk future dangers? Why not sail off in a boat, leaving no trace of your going? Why not go to Emei Mountain and wander free with Master Red Pine?”

Zhong Hui smiled.

“I do not think your advice much to the point. I am a young man, not forty yet, and think rather of going on than halting. I could not take up a do-nothing hermit’s life.”

“If you do not, then take heed and prepare for dangers. Think out a careful course, as you are well able to do. You need not trouble any old fool for advice.”

Zhong Hui laughed loud and rubbed his hands together with glee. “How well you know my thoughts, my friend!” said Zhong Hui.

They two became absorbed in the plans for their grand scheme.

But Jiang Wei wrote a secret letter to the Latter Ruler, saying:

“I pray Your Majesty be patient and put up with humiliations for a season, for Jiang Wei, your humble servant, will have the country restored in good time. The sun and moon are all the more glorious when they burst through the dark clouds. The House of Han is not yet done.”

While Zhong Hui and Jiang Wei were planning how best to outwit each other, but both being against Wei, there suddenly arrived a letter from Sima Zhao:

“I am at Changan with an army, lest there should be any difficulty in disposing of Deng Ai. I need you to come to discuss state affairs.”

Zhong Hui divined the real purport at once.

“He suspects,” said Zhong Hui. “He knows quite well that my army outnumbers that of Deng Ai many times and I could do what he wishes easily. There is more than that in his coming.”

He consulted Jiang Wei, who said, “When the prince suspects a minister, that minister dies. Have we not seen Deng Ai?”

“This decides me,” replied Zhong Hui. “Success, and the empire is mine; failure, and I go west into Shu to be another Liu Bei, but without his mistakes.”

Jiang Wei said, “Empress Guo of Wei has just died. You can pretend she left you a command to destroy Sima Zhao, the real murderer of the Emperor. Your talents are quite sufficient to conquer the empire.”

“Will you lead the van?” said Zhong Hui. “When success is ours, we will share the spoil.”

“The little I can do, I will do most willingly,” said Jiang Wei. “But I am not sure of the support of all our subordinates.”

“Tomorrow is the fifteenth day of the month; a Feast of Lanterns will be held. We can gather in the Palace for the congratulations. There will be grand illuminations, and we will prepare a banquet for the officers, whereat we can kill all those who will not follow us.”

At this, the heart of Jiang Wei leapt with joy. Invitations were sent out in the joint names of the two conspirators, and the feast began. After several courses, suddenly Zhong Hui lifted his cup and broke into wailing.

Everyone asked what was the cause of this grief, and Zhong Hui replied. "The Empress has just died, but before her death she gave me an edict, which is here, recounting the crimes of Sima Zhao and charging him with aiming at the Throne. I am commissioned to destroy him, and you all must join me in the task."

The guests stared at each other in amazement, but no one uttered a word.

Then the host suddenly drew his sword, crying, "Here is death for those who oppose!"

Not one was bold enough to refuse, and, one by one, they all signed a promise to help. As further security, they were all kept prisoners in the Palace under careful guard.

"They are not really with us," said Jiang Wei. "I venture to request you to bury them all."

"A great pit has been already dug," replied his brother-host. "And I have a lot of clubs ready. We can easily club those who disagree and bury them in the pit."

As Jiang Wei and Zhong Hui discussed the matter, General Qiu Jian, a man in the confidence of Zhong Hui, was present. He had once served under Assistant General Hu Lie, who was one of the imprisoned guests, and thus he found means to warn his former chief.

Hu Lie wept and said, "My son, Hu Yuan, is in command of a force outside the city. He will never suspect Zhong Hui capable of such a crime, and I pray you tell him. If I am to die, it will be with less regret if my son can be told."

"Kind master, have no anxiety; only leave it to me," replied Qiu Jian.

He went to Zhong Hui, and said, "Sir, you are holding in captivity a large number of officers, and they are suffering from lack of food and water. Will you not appoint an officer to supply their needs?"

Zhong Hui was accustomed to yield to the wishes of Qiu Jian, and he made no difficulty about this. He told Qiu Jian to see to it himself, only saying, "I am placing great trust in you, and you must be loyal. Our secret must be kept."

"My lord, you may be quite content. I know how to keep a strict watch when necessary."

And Qiu Jian allowed to enter into the place of confinement a trusty confidant of Hu Lie, who gave him a letter to his son Hu Yuan.

When Hu Yuan knew the whole story, he was astonished and told his subordinates, and they were greatly enraged.

They came to their commander's tent to say, "We would rather die than follow a rebel!"

So Hu Yuan fixed upon the eighteenth day of the month to attempt the rescue. He enlisted the sympathy of Wei Guan and got his army ready. He bade Qiu Jian tell his father what was afoot. Hu Lie then told his fellow captives.

One day, Zhong Hui said to Jiang Wei, "Last night, I dreamed a dream that I was bitten by many serpents. Can you expound the vision?"

Jiang Wei replied, "Dreams of dragons and snakes and scaly creatures are exceedingly auspicious."

Zhong Hui was only too ready to accept this interpretation. Then he told Jiang Wei that all was ready and they would put the crucial question to each captive.

“I know they are opposed to us, and you would do well to slay them all, and that right quickly,” replied Jiang Wei.

“Good,” replied Zhong Hui.

He bade Jiang Wei with several ruffians kill the Wei leaders among the captives. But just as Jiang Wei was starting to carry out these instructions, he was seized with a sudden spasm of the heart, so severe that he fainted. He was raised from the earth and in time revived. Just as he came to, a tremendous hubbub arose outside the Palace. Zhong Hui at once sent to inquire what was afoot, but the noise waxed louder and louder, sounding like the rush of a multitude.

“The officers must be raging,” said Zhong Hui. “We would best slay them at once!”

But they told him, “The outside soldiers are in the Palace!”

Zhong Hui bade them close the doors of the Hall of Audience, and he sent his own troops upon the roof to pelt the incoming soldiers with tiles. Many were slain on either side in the melee. Then, a fire broke out. The assailants broke open the doors. Zhong Hui faced them and slew a few, but others shot at him with flights of arrows, and he fell and died. They hacked off his head.

Jiang Wei ran to and fro, slaying all he met, till another heart spasm seized him.

“Failed!” he shrieked. “But it is the will of Heaven!”

He put an end to his own life. He was fifty-nine.

Many hundreds were slain within the Forbidden City. Wei Guan presently ordered that the soldiers were to be led back to their various camps to await the orders of the Duke of Jin.

The soldiers of Wei, burning for revenge of his many invasions, hacked the dead body of Jiang Wei to pieces. They found his gall bladder extraordinarily large, as large as a hen's egg. They also seized and slew all the family of the dead leader.

Seeing that Deng Ai's two enemies on the spot were both dead, his old soldiers bethought themselves of trying to rescue him. When Wei Guan, who had actually arrested Deng Ai, heard this, he feared for his life.

"If Deng Ai lives, I will die in his hand!" said Wei Guan.

Furthermore, General Tian Xu said, "When Deng Ai took Jiangyou, he wished to put me to death. It was only at the prayer of my friends that he let me off. May I not have my revenge now?"

So Wei Guan gave the order. At the head of five hundred cavalry, Tian Xu went in pursuit of the cage-carts. He came up with them at Mianzhu and found that the two prisoners had just been released from the carts in which they were being carried to Luoyang.

When Deng Ai saw that those coming up were soldiers of his own late command, he took no thought for defense. Nor did Tian Xu waste time in preliminaries. He went up to where Deng Ai was standing and cut him down. His soldiers fell upon the son, Deng Zhong, and slew him also, and thus father and son met death in the same place.



A poem, pitying Deng Ai, was written:

While yet a boy, Deng Ai loved to sketch and plan;
He was an able leader as a man.
The earth could hide no secrets from his eye,

With equal skill he read the starry sky.
Past every obstacle his way he won,
And onward pressed until his task was done.
But foulest murder closed a great career,
His spirit ranges now a larger sphere.

A poem was also composed in pity for Zhong Hui:

Of mother wit Zhong Hui had no scanty share,
And in due time at court did office bear.
His subtle plans shook Sima Zhao's hold on power,
He was well-named the Zhang Liang of the hour.
Shouchun and Saber Pass ramparts straight fell down,
When he attacked, and he won great renown.
Ambition beckoned, he would forward press
His spirit homeward wandered, bodiless.

Another poem, in pity of Jiang Wei, runs:

Tianshui boasts of a hero,
Talent came forth from Xizhou,
Lu Wang fathered his spirit,
Zhuge Liang tutored his mind,
Valiant he ever pressed forward,
Nor had a thought of returning,
Grieved were the soldiers of Han
When death rapt his soul from his body.



And thus died all three leaders. Many other generals also perished in the fighting, and with them died Zhang Yi and other officers. Liu Rui, the heir-apparent, and Guan Yi, Lord of Hanshou and grandson of Guan Yu, were also killed by the Wei soldiers. Then followed a time of great confusion and bloodshed, which endured till Jia Chong arrived and restored confidence and order.

Jia Chong set Wei Guan over the city of Chengdu and sent the captive Latter Ruler to Luoyang. A few officers—Fan Jian, Zhang Shao, Qiao Zhou, and Xi Zheng—accompanied the deposed emperor on this degrading journey. Liao Hua and Dong Jue made illness an excuse not to go. They died of grief soon after.

At this time, the year-style of Wei was changed from Wonderful Beginning, the fifth year, to Great Glory, the first year (AD 264). In the third month of this year, since nothing could be done to assist Shu to recover its independence, the troops of Wu under Ding Feng were withdrawn and returned to their own land.

Now Secretary Hua Jiao sent up a memorial to Sun Xiu, the Ruler of Wu, saying, “Wu and Shu were as close as are one’s lips to one’s teeth, and when the lips are gone, the teeth are cold. Without doubt, Sima Zhao will now turn his thoughts to attacking us, and Your Majesty must realize the danger and prepare to meet it.”

Sun Xiu knew that he spoke truly, so he set Lu Kang, son of the late leader Lu Xun, over the army of Jingzhou and the river ports with the title General Who Guards the East; Sun Yin was sent to Nanxun; and Ding Feng was ordered to set up several hundred garrisons along the river banks.

In Shu, when Huo Yi, Governor of Jianning, heard that Chengdu had been taken, he dressed himself in white and wailed for three days, facing west toward the capital.

“Now that the capital has fallen and the Ruler of Shu is a captive, it would be well to surrender,” said his officers.

Huo Yi replied, “There is a hindrance. I know not how fares our lord, whether he is in comfort or in misery. If his captors treat him generously, then will I yield. But perhaps they will put him to shame; when the prince is shamed, the minister dies.”

So certain persons were sent to Luoyang to find out how fared the Latter Ruler.

Soon after the Latter Ruler reached the capital of Wei, Sima Zhao returned.

Seeing the Latter Ruler at court, Sima Zhao upbraided him, saying, “You deserved death for your vicious courses—corrupt morality, unchecked self-indulgence, contempt of good people, and misgovernment—which had brought misfortune upon yourself!”

Hearing this, the face of the Latter Ruler turned to the color of clay with fear, and he was speechless.

But the courtiers said, “He has lost his kingdom, he has surrendered without a struggle, and he now deserves pardon.”

Thus the Latter Ruler suffered no injury, but was created Duke of Anle. Moreover, he was assigned a residence and a revenue, and he received presents of silk, and servants were sent to wait upon him, males

and females in total one hundred. His son Liu Dao and the officers of Shu—Fan Jian, Qiao Zhou, Xi Zheng, and others—were given ranks of nobility. The Latter Ruler expressed his thanks and left.

Huang Hao, whose evil influence had brought the kingdom to nought, and who had oppressed the people, was put to death with ignominy in the public place.

When Huo Yi heard all these things, he came with his officers and yielded submission.

Next, day the Latter Ruler went to the residence of Sima Zhao to thank him for his bounty, and a banquet was prepared. At the banquet, they performed the music of Wei, with the dances, and the hearts of the officers of Shu were sad. Only the Latter Ruler appeared merry.

Halfway through the feast, Sima Zhao said to Jia Chong, “The man lacks feeling. That is what has ruined him. Even if Zhuge Liang had lived, he could not have maintained such a man. It is no wonder that Jiang Wei failed.”

Turning to his guest, Sima Zhao said, “Do you never think of Shu?”

“With such music as this, I forget Shu,” replied the Latter Ruler.

Presently, the Latter Ruler rose and left the table to change dress.

Xi Zheng went over to him and said, “Why did Your Majesty not say you missed Shu? If Your Majesty is questioned again, weep and say that in Shu are the tombs of your forefathers and no day passes that Your Majesty does not grieve to be so far away. The Duke of Jin may let Your Majesty return.”

The Latter Ruler promised he would.

When the wine had gone round several more times, Sima Zhao put the same question a second time: “Do you never think of Shu?”

The Latter Ruler replied as he had been told. He also tried to weep but failed to shed a tear. So he shut his eyes.

“Is not that just what Xi Zheng told you to say?” asked Sima Zhao.

“It is just as you say,” was the reply.

They all laughed. But really Sima Zhao was pleased with the frank answer and felt that nothing was to be feared from him.



Laughter loving, pleasure pursuing,
Rippling smiles over a merry face,
Never a thought of his former glory
In his callous heart finds place.
Childish joy in a change of dwelling,
That he feels and that alone;
Manifest now that he was never
Worthy to sit on his father's throne.

The courtiers thought that so grand an exploit as the conquest of the River Lands was worthy of high honor, so they memorialized the Ruler of Wei, Cao Huang, to confer the rank Prince of Jin on Sima Zhao. At that time, Cao Huang ruled in name only, for he had no authority. The whole land was under Sima Zhao, whose will the Emperor himself dared not cross. And so, in due course, the Duke of Jin became Prince of Jin.

After being made Prince of Jin, Sima Zhao posthumously created his father, Sima Yi, the Original Prince and his late elder brother, Sima Shi, the

Wonderful Prince.

The wife of Sima Zhao was the daughter of Wang Su. She bore to him two sons, the elder of whom was named Sima Yan. Sima Yan was huge of frame, his flowing hair reached to the ground when he stood up, and both hands hung down below his knees. He was clever, brave, and skilled in the use of arms.

The second son, Sima You, was mild of disposition, a filial son and a dutiful brother. His father loved him dearly. As Sima Shi had died without leaving sons, this youth, Sima You, was regarded as his son, to continue that line of the family.

Sima Zhao used to say, "The empire was really my brother's."

Becoming a prince, it was necessary for Sima Zhao to choose his heir, and he wished to name his younger son, Sima You. But Shan Tao remonstrated.

"It is improper and infelicitous to prefer the younger," said Shan Tao.

And Jia Chong, He Zeng, and Pei Xiu followed in the same strain.

"The elder is clever, able in war: one of the most talented people in the state and popular. With such natural advantages, he has a great destiny; he was not born to serve."

Sima Zhao hesitated, for he was still unwilling to abandon his desire.

But two other officers, Grand Commander Wang Xiang and Minister of Works Xun Kai, also remonstrated, saying, "Certain former dynasties have preferred the younger before the elder, and rebellion has generally followed. We pray you reflect upon these cases."

Finally, Sima Zhao yielded and named his elder son, Sima Yan, as his successor.

Certain officers memorialized, “This year, a gigantic figure of a man descended from Heaven in Xiangwu. His height was twenty feet, and his footprint measured over three feet. He had white hair and a hoary beard. He wore an unlined yellow robe and a yellow cape. He walked leaning on a black-handled staff. This extraordinary man preached, saying, ‘I am the king of the people, and now I come to tell you of a change of ruler and the coming of peace.’ He wandered about for three days and then disappeared.

“Evidently this portent refers to yourself, Noble Sir, and now you should assume the imperial headdress with twelve strings of pearls, set up the imperial standard, and have the roads cleared when you make a procession. You should ride in the golden-shafted chariot with six horses. Your consort should be styled ‘Empress’ and your heir ‘Apparent.’”

Sima Zhao was greatly pleased. He returned to his palace, but just as he was sitting down, he was suddenly seized with paralysis and lost the use of his tongue. He quickly grew worse. His three chief confidants, Wang Xiang, He Zeng, and Xun Kai, together with many court officials, came to inquire after his health, but he could not speak to them. He pointed toward the heir apparent, Sima Yan, and died. It was the eighth month of that year.

Then, said He Zeng, “The care of the empire devolves upon the Prince of Jin let us induct the heir. Then we can perform the sacrifices to the late prince.”

Thereupon, Sima Yan was set up in his father’s place. He gave He Zeng the title of Prime Minister; Sima Wang, Minister of the Interior; Shi Bao, Commander of the Flying Cavalry; and conferred many other titles and ranks. The posthumous title of the “Scholar Prince” was conferred upon his late father.

When the obsequies were finished, Sima Yan summoned Jia Chong and Pei Xiu into the Palace, and said, “Cao Cao said that if the celestial

mandate rested upon him, he could be no more than King Wen of Zhou, who served as a regent only. Is this really so?”

Jia Chong replied, “Cao Cao was in the service of Han and feared lest posterity should reproach him with usurpation. Wherefore he spoke thus. Nevertheless, he caused Cao Pi to become Emperor.”

“How did my father compare with Cao Cao?” asked Sima Yan.

“Although Cao Cao was universally successful, the people feared him and credited him with no virtue. Cao Pi’s rule was marked by strife and lack of tranquility. No single year was peaceful. Later, the Original Prince and Wonderful Prince of your line rendered great services and disseminated compassion and virtue, so that they were beloved. Your late father overcame Shu in the west and was universally renowned. Comparison with Cao Cao is impossible.”

“Still, Cao Pi succeeded the rule of Han. Can I not in like manner succeed that of Wei?”

Jia Chong and Pei Xiu bowed low and said, “Cao Pi’s action may be taken as a precedent to succeed an older dynasty. Wherefore, prepare an abdication terrace to make the great declaration.”

Sima Yan resolved to act promptly. Next day, he entered the Forbidden City, armed with a sword. No court had been held for many days, for Cao Huang was ill at ease and full of dread. When Sima Yan appeared, the Ruler of Wei left his place and advanced to meet him. Sima Yan sat down.

“By whose merits did Wei succeed to empire?” he asked suddenly.

“Certainly, success was due to your forefathers,” replied Cao Huang.

Sima Yan smiled, saying, “Your Majesty is unskilled in debate, inept in war, and unfit to rule. Why not give place to another more able and virtuous?”

Cao Huang's lips refused a reply.

But Zhang Jie, one of the ministers, cried, "You are wrong to speak thus, O Prince. His Majesty's ancestor conquered east and west, north and south, and won the empire by strenuous effort. The present Emperor is virtuous and without fault. Why should he yield his place to another?"

Sima Yan replied angrily, "The imperial right lay with the Hans, and Cao Cao coerced them as he did the nobles. In making himself the Prince of Wei, he usurped the Throne of Han. Three generations of my forefathers upheld the House of Wei so that their power is not the result of their own abilities but of the labor of my house. This is known to all the world, and am I not equal to carrying on the rule of Wei?"

"If you do this thing, you will be a rebel and an usurper," said Zhang Jie.

"And what shall I be if I avenge the wrongs of Han?"

He bade the lictors take Zhang Jie outside and beat him to death, while the Ruler of Wei wept and besought pardon for his faithful minister.

Sima Yan rose and left.

Cao Huang turned to Jia Chong and Pei Xiu, saying, "What should I do? Some decision must be taken."

They replied, "Truth to tell, the measure of your fate is accomplished, and you cannot oppose the will of Heaven. You must prepare to abdicate, as did Emperor Xian of the Hans. Resign the throne to the Prince of Jin and thereby accord with the design of Heaven and the will of the people. Your personal safety need not cause you anxiety."

Cao Huang could only accept this advice, and the terrace was built. The "mouse" day of the twelfth month was chosen for the ceremony. On that day, the Ruler of Wei, dressed in full robes of ceremony, and bearing

the seal in his hand, ascended the terrace in the presence of a great assembly.



The House of Wei displaced the House of Han
And Jin succeeded Wei; so turns fate's wheel
And none escape its grinding. Zhang Jie the true
Stood in the way and died. We pity him.
Vain hope with one hand to hide the Taishan
Mountains.



The Emperor-elect was requested to ascend to the high place, and there received the great salute. Cao Huang then descended, robed himself as a minister, and took his place as the first of subjects.

Sima Yan now stood upon the terrace, supported by Jia Chong and Pei Xiu. Cao Huang was ordered to prostrate himself, while the command was recited, and Jia Chong read:

“Forty-five years have elapsed since, in the twenty-fifth year of Rebuilt Tranquility, the House of Han gave place to the House of Wei. But after forty-five years, the favor of Heaven has now left the latter House and reverts to Jin. The merits and services of the family of Sima reach to the high heavens and pervade the earth. The Prince of Jin is fitted for the high office and to continue the rule. Now, His Majesty the Emperor confers upon you the title of Prince of Chenliu. You are to

proceed to the city of Jinyong, where you will reside; you are forbidden to come to court unless summoned.”

Sadly, Cao Huang withdrew with tears in his eyes. Sima Fu, Imperial Guardian, wept before the deposed Emperor and promised eternal devotion.

“I have been a servant of Wei and will never turn my back upon the House!” said he.

Sima Yan did not take this amiss, and out of admiration he offered Sima Fu the principedom of Anping. But Sima Fu declined the offer.

The new Emperor was now seated in his place, and all the officers made their salutations and felicitated him. The very hills rang with “*Wansui!* O King, live forever!”

Thus succeeded Sima Yan, and the state was called Great Jin, and a new year-style was changed from Great Glory, the second year, to Great Beginning Era, the first year (AD 265). An amnesty was declared. Wei Dynasty had ended.



The kingdom of Wei had ended.

The Founder of the Dynasty of Jin

Took Wei as model; thus the displaced emperor

Was named a prince, when on the terrace high

His throne he had renounced.

We grieve when we recall these deeds.



The new Emperor conferred posthumous rank upon his grandfather, his uncle, and his father: Sima Yi the Original Emperor, Sima Shi the Wonderful Emperor, and Sima Zhao the Scholar Emperor. Sima Yan built seven temples in honor of his ancestors: Sima Jun, the Han General Who Conquers the West; Sima Jun's son, Sima Liang, Governor of Yuzhang; Sima Liang's son, Sima Juan, Governor of Yingchuan; Sima Juan's son, Sima Fang, Governor of Jingzhao; Sima Fang's son, Sima Yi the Original Emperor; and Sima Yi's sons, Sima Shi the Wonderful Emperor and Sima Zhao the Scholar Emperor.

All these things being accomplished, courts were held daily, and the one subject of discussion was the subjugation of Wu.

The House of Han has gone for aye,
And Wu will quickly follow.

The story of the attack upon Wu will be told next.



Romance of the Three Kingdoms
Act XXVI

CHAPTER 120

RECOMMENDING DU YU, AN OLD GENERAL OFFERS NEW PLANS;
CAPTURING SUN HAO, THREE KINGDOMS BECOME ONE.

When Sun Xiu, the Ruler of Wu, knew that the House of Wei had fallen before the Jins, he also knew that the usurper's next thought would be the conquest of his own land. The anxiety made him ill, so that he took to his bed and was likely to die. He then summoned to his bedside his Prime Minister, Puyang Xing, and his heir, Sun Wan. But they two came almost too late. The dying Ruler, with his last effort, took the Minister by the hand, but could only point to his son. Then he died.

Puyang Xing left the couch and called a meeting of the officers, whereat he proposed to place the heir on his father's throne.

Then Wan Yu, Inspector of the Left Army, rose and said, "Prince Sun Wan is too youthful to rule in such troublous times. Let us confer the throne to Sun Hao, Lord of Wucheng."

Zhang Bu, General of the Left Army, supported his appointment, saying, "Sun Hao is able and prompt in decision. He can handle the responsibilities of an emperor."

However, Puyang Xing was doubtful and consulted the Empress Dowager.

"Settle this with the officials," she replied. "I am a widow and know nothing of such matters."

Finally, Sun Hao won the day, and in the seventh month he was enthroned as Emperor of Wu, and the first year of his reign was Prosperous

Beginning (AD 264). Sun Hao was the son of Sun He, a former Heir Apparent, and grandson of Sun Quan the Great Emperor. The excluded prince, Sun Wan, was consoled with the title of Prince of Yuzhang. Posthumous rank was given to his late father, Sun He the Scholar Emperor, and his mother, Lady He, the Scholar Empress. The Veteran Leader Ding Feng was made Commander of the Right and Left Armies.

However, the year-style was changed to Sweet Dew the very next year. The new ruler soon proved himself cruel and oppressive and day by day grew more so. Sun Hao indulged in every form of vice and chose Eunuch Cen Hun as his confidant and favorite. When Prime Minister Puyang Xing and General Zhang Bu ventured upon remonstrance, both, with all their families, were put to death. Thereafter, none dared to speak; the mouth of every courtier was shut tight.

Another year-style, Treasured Paramount, was adopted the next year (266), and the responsibility of the Prime Minister's office was shared by two officers, Lu Kuai the Left and Wan Yu the Right.

At this time, the imperial residence was in Wuchang. The people of Yangzhou shouldered heavy taxes and suffered exceedingly. There was no limit to the Ruler's extravagance. The treasury was swept clean, and the income of the royal domain exhausted.

At length, Lu Kuai, Left Prime Minister, ventured a memorial, saying:

“No natural calamity has fallen upon the people, yet they starve; no public work is in progress, yet the treasury is empty. I am distressed. The country under the Hans has fallen apart, and three

states have arisen therefrom. Those ruled by the Caos and the Lius, as the result of their own folly, have been lost to Jin. Foolish I may be, but I would protect the state for Your Majesty against the evils we have seen in the other territories.

“This city of Wuchang is not safe as a royal residence. There is a rhyme concerning it, the gist of which is that it is better to drink the water of Jianye than eat the fish of Wuchang, better to die in Jianye than to live in Wuchang. This shows the regard of the people as well as the will of Heaven. Now the public storehouses are nearly empty; they contain insufficient for a year’s use. The officers of all grades vex and distress the people, and none pity them.

“In former times, the Palace women numbered less than a hundred; for years past, they have exceeded a thousand. This is an extravagant waste of treasure. The courtiers render no disinterested service, but are split into cliques and cabals. The honest are injured, and the good driven away. All these things undermine the state and weaken the people. I beg Your Majesty to reduce the number of officers and remove grievances, to dismiss the Palace women and select honest officers, to the joy of the people and the tranquility of the state.”

But the Ruler of Wu was displeased, threw the memorial away, and showed his contempt for the Minister’s remonstrance by beginning to collect material for the building of a new palace complex to be called the Reflected Light Palace. He even made the officers of the court go into the forest to fell trees for the work.

The Ruler of Wu called in the soothsayer Shang Guang and bade him take the cast and inquire as to the attainment of empire.

Shang Guang cast a lot and replied, "All is propitious, and in the year of the mouse, your blue umbrella will enter Luoyang!"

And Sun Hao was pleased.

He said to Minister Hua Jiao, "The former Rulers listened to your words and sent generals to various points and placed defensive camps along the rivers. And over all these was set Ding Feng. Now my desire is to conquer Han and avenge the wrongs of my brother, the Ruler of Shu. What place should be first conquered?"

Hua Jiao replied, "Now that Chengdu has fallen and the Throne there been overturned, Sima Yan will assuredly desire to absorb this southern land. Your Majesty should display virtue and restore confidence to your people. That would be the best plan. If you engage in war, it will be like throwing on hemp to put out a fire: the hemp only adds to the blaze. This is worthy of careful consideration."

But Sun Hao grew angry and said, "I desire to take this opportunity to return to my real heritage. Why do you employ this ill-omened language? Were it not for your long service, now would I slay you and expose your head as a warning."

He bade the lictors hustle Minister Hua Jiao from his presence, and Hua Jiao left the court.

"It is pitiful," said Hua Jiao. "Ere long, our silky, beautiful country will pass to another!"

So Hua Jiao retired.

And the Ruler of Wu ordered Lu Kang, General Who Guards the East, to camp his army at Jiangkou in order to attack Xiangyang.

Spies reported this in Luoyang, and it was told the Ruler of Jin. When Sima Yan heard that the army of Wu threatened to invade Xiangyang, he called a council.

Jia Chong stood forth, saying, "I hear the government of Wu, under its present ruler, Sun Hao, is devoid of virtue, and the Ruler of Wu has turned aside from the road. Your Majesty should send Commander Yang Hu to oppose this army. When internal trouble shall arise, let him attack, and victory will then be easy."

The Ruler of Jin issued an edict ordering Yang Hu to prepare, and so he mustered his troops and set himself to guard the county.

Yang Hu became very popular in Xiangyang. Any of the soldiers of Wu who desired to desert to the other side were allowed to come over. He employed only the fewest possible troops on patrol duty. Instead, he set his soldiers to till the soil, and they cultivated an extensive area, whereby the hundred-days' supplies with which they set out were soon increased to enough for ten years.

Yang Hu maintained great simplicity, wearing the lightest of garments and no armor. His personal escort and servants numbered only about ten.

One day, his officers came to his tent and said, "The spies reported great laxity in the enemy's camp. It is time to make an attack!"

But Yang Hu replied, "You must not despise Lu Kang, for he is able and crafty. Formerly, his master sent him to attack Xiling, and he slew Bu Chan and many of his generals, before I could save that city. So long as Lu Kang remains in command, I shall remain on the defensive. I shall not attack till there be trouble and confusion among our enemies. To be rash and not await the proper moment to attack is to invite defeat."

They found him wise and said no more. They only kept the boundaries.

One day, Yang Hu and his officers went out to hunt, and it happened that Lu Kang had chosen the same day to hunt. Yang Hu gave strict orders not to cross the boundary, and so each hunted only on his own side.

Lu Kang was astonished at the enemy's scrupulous propriety. He sighed, "The soldiers of Yang Hu have so high a discipline that I may not make any invasion now."

In the evening, after both parties had returned, Yang Hu ordered an inspection of the slaughtered game and sent over to the other side any that seemed to have been first struck by the soldiers of Wu.

Lu Kang was greatly pleased and sent for the bearers of the game.

"Does your leader drink wine?" asked he.

They replied, "Only fine wines does he drink."

"I have some very old wine," replied Lu Kang, smiling, "and I will give of it to you to bear to your general as a gift. It is the wine I myself brew and drink on ceremonial occasions, and he shall have half in return for today's courtesy."

They took the wine and left.

"Why do you give him wine?" asked Lu Kang's officers.

"Because he has shown kindness, and I must return courtesy for courtesy."

When the gift of wine arrived and the bearers told Yang Hu the story of their reception, he laughed.

“So he knows I can drink,” said Yang Hu.

He had the jar opened, and the wine was poured out. One of his generals, Chen Yuan, begged him to drink moderately lest there should be some harm come of it.

“Lu Kang is no poisoner,” replied Yang Hu.

And he drank. The friendly intercourse thus continued, and messengers frequently passed from one camp to the other.

One day, the messengers said that Lu Kang was unwell and had been ailing for several days.

“I think he suffers from the same complaint as I,” said Yang Hu. “I have some remedies ready prepared and will send him some.”

The drugs were taken over to the Wu camp.

But the sick man’s officers were suspicious and said, “This medicine is surely harmful; it comes from the enemy.”

However, Lu Kang said, “No, old Uncle Yang Hu would not poison a person. Do not doubt.”

He drank the decoction. Next day, he was much better.

When his staff came to congratulate him, he said, “If our opponents take their stand upon virtue and we take ours upon violence, they will drag us after them without fighting. See to it that the boundaries be well kept and that we seek not to gain any unfair advantage.”

Soon after came a special envoy from the Ruler of Wu to urge upon Lu Kang prompt activity.

“Our Emperor sends orders for you to press forward,” said the envoy. “You are not to await a Jin invasion.”

“You may return, and I will send up a memorial,” replied Lu Kang.

So a memorial was written and soon followed the envoy to the capital, which by this time was Jianye. When the Ruler of Wu, Sun Hao, read it, he found therein many arguments against attacking Jin and exhortations to exercise a virtuous rule instead of engaging in hostilities. It angered him.

“They say Lu Kang has come to an understanding with the enemy, and now I believe it!” said the Ruler of Wu.

Thereupon, he deprived Lu Kang of his command and took away his commission and degraded him to Marching General. Sun Ji, General of the Left Army, was sent to supersede Lu Kang. And none dared to intervene.

Sun Hao became still more arbitrary and, of his own will, changed the year-style once more to the Phoenix (AD 269). Day by day, his life became more wanton and vicious. The soldiers in every camp murmured with anger and resentment, and at last three high officers—Prime Minister Wan Yu, General Liu Ping, and Minister of Agriculture Lou Xuan—boldly and earnestly remonstrated with the Emperor for his many irregularities. They suffered death. Within ten years, more than forty ministers were put to death for doing their duty.

Sun Hao maintained an extravagantly large guard of fifty thousand heavy cavalry, and these soldiers were the terror of everyone.

Now when Yang Hu, on the Jin side of the frontier, heard that his opponent Lu Kang had been removed from his command and that the conduct of the

Ruler of Wu had become wholly unreasonable, he knew that the time was near for him to conquer Wu. Wherefore, he presented a memorial:

“Although fate is superior to humankind, success yet depends upon human effort. Now, as the geographic difficulties of the South Land are not as those of the River Lands, while the ferocity of Sun Hao exceeds that of Liu Shan, the misery of the people of Wu exceeds that of the dwellers in Shu. Our armies are stronger than ever before, and if we miss this opportunity to bring the whole land under one rule, but continue to weary our army with continual watching and cause the world to groan under the burden of militarism, then our efficiency will decline and we shall not endure.”

When Sima Yan read this, he gave orders for the army to move. But three officers—Jia Chong, Xun Xu, and Feng Dan—opposed it, and the orders were withdrawn.

Yang Hu was disappointed at the news and said, “What a pity it is that of ten affairs in the world, one always meets with eight or nine vexations!”

In the fourth year of Universal Tranquility, in the Jin calendar (AD 278), Yang Hu went to court and asked leave to retire on account of ill health.

Before granting him leave to go, Sima Yan asked, “Do you have plans to propose to settle the empire?”

Yang Hu replied, “Sun Hao is a very cruel ruler and could be conquered without fighting. If he were to die, and a wise successor sat upon his throne, Your Majesty would never be able to gain possession of Wu.”

The Ruler of Jin realized the truth, and he said, "Suppose your army attacked now. What then?"

"I am now too old and too ill for the task," replied Yang Hu. "Some other bold and capable leader must be found."

Yang Hu left the court and retired to his home. Toward the end of the year he was nigh unto death, and the Ruler of Jin went to visit him. The sight of his master at his bedside brought tears to the eyes of the faithful old leader.

"If I died a myriad times, I could never requite Your Majesty," said Yang Hu.

Sima Yan also wept, saying, "My great grief is that I could not take advantage of your abilities to attack Wu. Who, now, is there to carry out your design?"

Hesitatingly, the sick man replied, "I am dying and must be wholly sincere. General Du Yu is equal to the task, and is the one man to attack Wu."

Sima Yan said, "How beautiful it is to bring good people into prominence! But why did you write a memorial recommending certain people and then burn the draft so that no one knew?"

The dying man answered, "I bowed before the officials in open court, but I did not beseech the kindness of the private attendants."

So Yang Hu died, and Sima Yan wailed for him and then returned to his palace. He conferred on the dead leader the posthumous rank of Imperial Guardian and Lord of Juping. The traders closed their shops out of respect to his memory, and all the frontier camps were filled with wailing.

The people of Xiangyang, recalling that he loved to wander on the Xian Hills, built there a temple to him and set up a stone and sacrificed

regularly at the four seasons. The passersby were moved to tears when they read Yang Hu's name on the tablet, so that it came to be called "The Stone of Tears."



I saw the fragments of a shattered stone
One springtime on the hillside, when, alone,
I walked to greet the sun. The pines distilled
Big drops of dew unceasing; sadness filled
My heart. I knew this was the Stone of Tears,
The stone of memory of long-past years.



On the strength of Yang Hu's recommendation, Du Yu was made Commander of Jingzhou, and the title of General Who Guards the South was conferred upon him. He was a man of great experience, untiring in study and devoted to the *Zuo Volume*, the book of commentaries composed by Zuo Qiuming upon the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. In hours of leisure, a copy of the *Zuo Volume* was never out of his hand, and when he went abroad, an attendant rode in front with the beloved book. He was said to be "Zuo mad."

Du Yu went to Xiangyang and began by being kind to the people and caring for his soldiers. By this time, Wu had lost, by death, both Ding Feng and Lu Kang.

The conduct of the Ruler of Wu waxed worse and worse. He used to give great banquets whereat intoxication was universal. He appointed Rectors of Feasts to observe all the faults committed by guests, and after

these banquets all offenders were punished, some by flaying the face, others by gouging out the eyes. Everyone went in terror of these Rectors.

Wang Jun, Imperial Protector of Yizhou, sent in a memorial advising an attack upon Wu. He said:

“Sun Hao is steeped in vice and should be attacked at once. Should he die and be succeeded by a good ruler, we might meet with serious opposition. The ships I built seven years ago lie idle and rotting; we can use them. I am seventy years of age and must soon die. If any one of these three events happen—the death of Sun Hao, the destruction of these ships, or my death—then success will be difficult to ensure. I pray Your Majesty not to miss the tide.”

At the next assembly of officers, Sima Yan said to them, “I have decided to act. I have received similar advice from Yang Hu and Wang Jun.”

At this arose Minister Wang Hun and said, “I hear Sun Hao intends to march north to the Middle Land and has his army ready. Report says it is formidable and would be hard to defeat. I counsel to await another year till that army has lost its first vigor.”

A command to cease warlike preparations was the result of this counsel. The Ruler of Jin betook himself to his private chamber, where he engaged in a game of chess with Secretary Zhang Hua as opponent. While at the game, another memorial arrived. It was from Du Yu. It read:

“Formerly, Yang Hu explained his plans confidentially to Your Majesty but did not lay them before the court. The result has been much debate and conflict of opinion. In every project, there are pros and cons, but in this, the arguments are mostly in favor. The worst that

can happen is failure. Since last autumn, the proposed attack has become generally known, and, if we stop now, Sun Hao will be frightened and remove the capital to Wuchang, repair his fortifications in the South Land, and move his threatened people out of danger. Then the southern capital cannot be assaulted, nor is there anything left in the countryside to rob. Hence next year's attack will also fail."

Just as the Ruler of Jin finished reading, Zhang Hua pushed aside the board, rose, and drew his hands into his sleeves, saying, "Your Majesty's skill in war is almost divine, your state is prosperous, and the army strong. The Ruler of Wu is a tyrant, his people are miserable, and his country mean. Now you can easily conquer him, and I pray that there be no further hesitation!"

"How could I hesitate after your discourse?" said Sima Yan.

Thereupon, he returned to the council chamber and issued his commands. Du Yu was made Commander-in-Chief and, with one hundred thousand troops, was to attack Jiangling; Sima Zhou, Prince of Langye and General Who Guards the East, was to attack Tuzhong; Wang Hun, General Who Conquers the East, to go up against Hengjiang; Wang Rong, General Who Exhibits Prowess, to move against Wuchang; and Hu Fen, General Who Pacifies the South, to attack Xiakou. And all divisions, fifty thousand troops each, were under the orders of Du Yu. In addition to the land forces, two large fleets were to operate on the river under Wang Jun, General Who Shows Dragon Courage, and Tang Bin, General Who Possesses Martial Bravery. Marines and lands troops amounted to more than two hundred thousand. A separate force under Yang Ji, General Who Holds the South, was sent away to Xiangyang to coordinate all forces.

The Ruler of Wu was greatly alarmed at the news of such armies and fleets, and he called to him quickly his Prime Minister Zhang Ti, Minister of the Interior He Zhi, and Minister of Works Teng Xun, to consult how to defend his land.

Zhang Ti proposed, “Send Commander of the Flying Chariots Wu Yan to meet the enemy at Jiangling; Commander of the Flying Cavalry Sun Xin to Xiakou; I volunteer to take command of a camp at Niuzhu, together with the General of the Left Army, Shen Zong, and the General of the Right Army, Zhuge Xing, ready to lend help at any point.”

The Ruler of Wu approved his dispositions and felt satisfied that he was safe by land. But in the privacy of his own apartment, he felt miserable, for he realized that no preparations had been made against an attack by water under the Jin leader Wang Jun.

Then the favorite eunuch Cen Hun asked the Emperor why he bore a sad countenance, and Sun Hao told him of his dread of the enemy navy.

“The armies of Jin are coming, and I have deployed troops for general defense. Only, the water front, by which Wang Jun and his several thousand battleships sail east along the tide, makes me feel so worried.”

“But I have a scheme that will smash all Wang Jun’s ships!” cried Cen Hun.

“What is it?” asked the Ruler of Wu, pleased to hear this.

“Iron is plentiful. Make great chains with heavy links and stretch them across the river at various points. Also, forge many massive hammers and arrange them in the stream, so that when the enemy’s ships sail down before the wind, they will collide with the hammers and be wrecked. Then they will sail no more.”

Blacksmiths were soon at work on the riverbank, welding the links and forging the hammers. Work went on day and night, and soon all the chains were placed in different points.

As has been said, Du Yu was to attack Jiangling, and he sent General Zhou Zhi with eight hundred sailors to sail secretly along the Great River to capture Lexiang. There, they were to make an ambush in the Bashan Mountains and a great show of flags along the bank and among the trees. Drums were to be beaten and bombs exploded during the day and many fires lighted at night to give the appearance of a great army.

So Zhou Zhi sailed to the Bashan Mountains.

Next day, Du Yu directed the army and the marine forces in a simultaneous advance.

The scouts reported, "The Ruler of Wu has sent the land force under Wu Yan, the navy under Lu Jing, and the vanguard under Sun Xin!"

Du Yu led his forces forward. The vanguard of Wu, under Sun Xin, came up, and at the first encounter, Du Yu's army retired. Sun Xin landed his marines and pursued. But in the midst of the pursuit, a signal bomb sounded, and Sun Xin was attacked on all sides by the Jin troops. He tried to retire, but the army he had been pursuing, Du Yu's force, turned back, too, and joined in the attack. Wu's losses were very heavy, and Sun Xin hastened back to the city. But the eight hundred Jin soldiers of Zhou Zhi mingled with the Wu army at the ramparts and so entered the gates. The Jin soldiers raised signal fires on the walls.

This maneuver amazed Sun Xin, and he said, "The northern troops had surely flown across the river into the city!"

Sun Xin made an effort to escape, but the leader of Jin, Zhou Zhi, unexpectedly appeared and slew him.

Admiral Lu Jing of the Wu fleet had accompanied Sun Xin saw on the south shore, in the Bashan Mountains, a great standard bearing the name, "Jin General Who Guards the South Du Yu." Lu Jing became alarmed and landed to try to escape, but the Jin General Zhang Shang soon found and slew him.

At his position in Jiangling, Wu Yan heard of these defeats and knew his position was untenable, so he fled. However, he was soon captured and led into the presence of the victorious general.

"No use sparing you," said Du Yu, and he sentenced the prisoner to death.

Thus Jiangling was captured, and all the counties along the River Xiang and River Yuan as far as Huangzhou, which surrendered at the first summons.

Du Yu sent out officers to soothe the people of the conquered counties, and they suffered nothing from the soldiery. Next, he marched toward Wuchang, and that city also yielded. So the glory of Du Yu became very great. He then summoned his officers to a council to decide upon attacking Capital Jianye.

Hu Fen said, "A one-century rebellion will not be reduced completely at once. The time of the spring rise of waters is near, and our position is precarious. We should do well to await the coming spring."

Du Yu replied, "In the days of old, Yue Yi overcame the powerful state Qi in one battle at Jixi. Our prestige is now high and success certain, easy as the splitting of a bamboo, which seems to welcome the knife after the first few joints have been overcome. We shall meet no great opposition."

So Du Yu gave orders to the various leaders to move in concert against the capital land of Jianye.

Now the Jin leader Wang Jun had gone down the river with his naval force. From his scouts, he heard of the iron chains and the hammers that had been laid in the river to hinder his progress. But he only laughed. He constructed great rafts of timber and placed on them straw effigies of soldiers in armors and sent them downriver with the current. The defenders of Wu took them for real troops and, alarmed by their numbers, fled in panic. Then the great hammers and chains were dragged away as the rafts drifted on.

Moreover, on the rafts they laid great torches many fathoms long, and very thick, made of straw soaked in linseed oil. When the raft was checked by a chain, the torches were lighted and the chains exposed to the heat till they melted and broke asunder. Thus the rafts went downstream, conquering wherever they came.

Then the Prime Minister of Wu, Zhang Ti, sent two leaders, General of the Left Army Shen Zong and General of the Right Army Zhuge Xing, to try to check the advance of the armies.

Shen Zong said to his colleague, "The forces above have failed to stop the enemy, and the enemy will surely come here. We shall have to put forth all our strength. If haply we can succeed, the safety of our South Land is assured. But suppose we fight and lose the battle, then is our country lost."

"Sir, you only say what is too true," said Zhuge Xing.

Just as they talked of these matters came reports of the approach of their enemies in irresistible force. The two leaders were seized with panic and went back to see the Prime Minister.

“Our country is lost!” cried Zhuge Xing. “Why not run?”

“We all know that the land is doomed,” replied Zhang Ti. “But if we make no defense, and no one dies for his country, shall we not be shamed?”

Zhuce Xing left, weeping, and Zhang Ti went with Shen Zong to the army. The invaders soon arrived, and the Jin General Zhou Zhi was the first to break into the camp. Zhang Ti resisted stubbornly, but was soon slain in a melee, and Shen Zong was killed by Zhou Zhi. The army of Wu was defeated and scattered.



Jin's army banners waved on the Bashan Mountains
And trusty Zhang Ti in Jiangling fighting died;
He accepted not that the kingly grace was spent,
He rather chose to die than shame his side.

The armies of Jin conquered at Niuzhu and penetrated deeply into the country of Wu. From his camp Wang Jun sent a report of his victory to Luoyang, and Sima Yan was pleased.

But Jia Chong again opposed further fighting, saying, “The armies have been long absent, and the soldiers will suffer from the unhealthiness of the southern country. It would be well to call them home.”

Zhang Hua spoke against this course, saying, “The Jin army has reached the very home and center of the enemy. Soon, Wu courage will fail, and the Ruler of Wu himself will be our prisoner. To recall the army now would be to waste the efforts already made.”

The Ruler of Jin inclined to neither side.

Jia Chong turned upon Zhang Hua savagely, saying, "You are wholly ignorant and understand nothing. You are bent upon winning some sort of glory at the expense of our soldiers' lives. Death would be too good for you!"

"Why wrangle?" said Sima Yan. "Zhang Hua agrees with me, and he knows my wishes."

Just at this moment came a memorial from the leader Du Yu also recommending advance, whereupon the Ruler of Jin decided that the army should go on.

The royal mandate duly reached the camp of Wang Jun, and the Jin navy went out to the attack in great pomp. The soldiers of Wu made no defense, but surrendered at once.

When Sun Hao, the Ruler of Wu, heard his armies had surrendered thus, he turned pale, and his courtiers said, "What is to be done? Here the northern army comes nearer every day, and our troops just give in."

"But why do they not fight?" said Sun Hao.

The courtiers replied, "The one evil of today is Eunuch Cen Hun. Slay him, and we ourselves will go out and fight to the death!"

"How can a eunuch harm a state?" cried Sun Hao.

"Have we not seen what Huang Hao did in Shu?" shouted the courtiers in chorus.

Moved by sudden fury, the courtiers rushed into the Palace, found the wretched object of their hate, and slew him, and even feeding on his

palpitating flesh.

Then, Tao Jun said, “All my ships are small, but give me large vessels, and I will place thereon twenty thousand marines and go forth to fight. I can defeat the enemy.”

His request was granted, and the royal guards were sent up the river to join battle, while another naval force went downstream, led by Leader of the Van Zhang Xiang. But a heavy gale came on. The flags were blown down and lay over in the ships, and the marines would not embark. They scattered, leaving their leader with only a few score men.

Wang Jun, the leader of Jin, set sail and went down the river.

After passing the Three Mountains, the sailing master of his ship said, “The gale is too strong for the fleet to go on. Let us anchor till the storm has moderated.”

But Wang Jun would not listen. Drawing his sword, he said, “I wish to capture Capital Jianye and will not hear of anchoring.”

So he compelled the sailing master to continue. On the way, Zhang Xiang, one of the leaders of Wu, came to offer surrender.

“If you are in earnest, you will lead the way and help me,” said Wang Jun.

Zhang Xiang consented, returned to his own ship, and led the squadron. When he reached the walls of Jianye, he called to the defenders to open the gates and allow the Jin army to enter. The gates were opened.

When the Ruler of Wu heard that his enemies had actually entered the capital city, he wished to put an end to his life, but his officers prevented

this.

Secretary Hu Zong and Palace Officer Xue Rong said, “Your Majesty, why not imitate the conduct of Liu Shan of Shu, now Duke of Anle?”

So Sun Hao no longer thought of death, but went to offer submission. He bound himself and took a coffin with him. His officers followed him. He was graciously received, and the Jin General Wang Jun himself loosened the bonds, and the coffin was burned. The vanquished Ruler was treated with the ceremony due to a prince.



A poet of the Tang Dynasty wrote a few lines on this surrender:

Adown the stream ride storied warships tall;
With massive chains some seek to stop their way.
But Jiangling’s independence fades away,
And soon “We yield” is signaled from the wall.
Full oft I think of bygone days and sigh,
Along the stream, unmoved, the old hills rest,
While I am homeless on the earth’s broad breast,
Where grim old forts stand gray beneath the sky.



Therefore, Wu was subdued and ceased to exist as a state. Its 4 regions, 43 counties, 313 districts, 5,230,000 families, 62,000 civil officers, 230,000 soldiers and military officers, 23,000,000 inhabitants, its stores of grain, and over five thousand large ships, all fell booty to the victorious Jin Dynasty.

In the women's quarters of the Palace were found more than five thousand persons.

Proclamations were issued; treasuries and storehouses were sealed. Tao Jun's navy soon melted away without striking a blow. Wang Jun was greatly elated at his success. Sima Zhou, Prince of Langye, and General Wang Rong also arrived and congratulated each other.

When Du Yu, the Commander-in-Chief, arrived, there were great feasting and rewards for the soldiers. The granaries were opened and doles of grain issued to the people, so that they also were glad of peace.

Only one city stood out—Jianping, under Governor Wu Yang. However, he, too, surrendered when he heard the capital had fallen.

The tidings of all these successes reached Capital Luoyang just at the celebration of the birthday of the Ruler of Jin, and the rejoicings and congratulations were redoubled. At one of the banquets, the Ruler of Jin did honor to the memory of the late Yang Hu.

Raising his wine cup, and in a voice broken by emotion, he said, "Today's success is the merit of the Imperial Guardian. I regret that he is not here to share our rejoicings."

In Wu, Sun Xiu, General of the Flying Cavalry, went away from the court and wailed, facing the south. "Alas, ye blue heavens! What manner of man is this Sun Hao to yield thus the heritage of his family, won by the sword of General Sun Jian the Martialy Glorious in the brave days that are past?"

Meanwhile, the victors marched homeward, and Sun Hao went to Luoyang to present himself at court. In his capacity of minister, he

prostrated himself at the feet of the Emperor of the Jin Dynasty in the Hall of Audience. He was allowed a seat.

“I set that seat for you long ago,” said the Ruler of Jin.

“Thy servant also set a seat for Your Majesty in the south,” retorted Sun Hao.

The Ruler of Jin laughed loudly.

Then Jia Chong turned to Sun Hao and said, “I hear, Sir, that when you were in the south, they gouged out people’s eyes and flayed their faces. What crimes were so punished?”

“Murders of princes and malicious speech and disloyal conduct were so punished!”

Jia Chong was silenced, for he was ashamed.

Sun Hao was created Lord of Guiming. His sons and grandsons received minor ranks, and other grades were conferred upon his ministers who had followed him in his surrender. The sons and grandsons of the late Prime Minister of Wu, Zhang Ti, who had perished in battle, were given ranks. The victorious leader, Wang Jun, was rewarded with the title General Who Upholds the State. And many other ranks were conferred to the Jin officers.

The three states now became one empire under the rule of Sima Yan of the Jin Dynasty. That is, the world under heaven, after a long period of union, tends to divide; after a long period of division, tends to unite.

Liu Shan, the Emperor of Shu-Han, passed away in the seventh year of Great Beginning, in Jin calendar (AD 271). Cao Huang, the Emperor of

Wei, passed away in the first year of Magnificent Peace (AD 302). And Sun Hao, the Emperor of Wu, passed away in the fourth year of Prosperous Peace (AD 283). All three died of natural causes.

A poet has summed up the history of these stirring years in a poem:

It was the dawning of a glorious day
When first the Founder of the House of Han
Xianyang's proud palace entered. Noontide came
When Liu Xiu the imperial rule restored.
Alas, that Liu Xie succeeded in full time
And saw the setting of the sun of power!
He Jin, the feeble, fell beneath the blows
Of palace minions. Dong Zhuo, vile though bold,
Then ruled the court. The plot Wang Yun
To oust him, failed, recoiled on his own head.
Li Jue and Guo Si lit up the flame of war
And brigands swarmed like ants through all the land.
Then rose the valiant and deployed their might.
Sun Ce carved out a kingdom in the southeast,
North of Yellow River, the Yuans strove to make their
own.

Liu Zhang went west and seized on Ba and Shu,
Liu Biao laid hold on Jingzhou and Chu,
Zhang Lu, in turn, held Hanzhong by force.
Ma Teng and Han Sui kept Xiliang.
Tao Qian and Gongsun Zan built up quarters,

Zhang Xiu and Lu Bu challenged the bold.
But overtopping all, Cao Cao the strong
Became first minister, and to his side,
Drew many able people. He swayed the court,
Without, he held the nobles in his hand;
By force of arms he held the capital
Against all rivals. Of imperial stock
Was born Liu Bei, who with sworn Brothers twain
Made oath the dynasty should be restored.
These wandered homeless east and west for years,
A petty force. But Destiny was kind
And led Liu Bei to Nanyang's rustic cot,
Where lay Sleeping Dragon, he who
Already knew that the empire must be rent.
Twice Liu Bei essayed in vain to see the sage
Once more he went. And then his fortune turned.
Jingzhou fell to him, followed the River Lands,
A fitting base to build an empire on.
Alas! He ruled there only three short years,
Then left his only son to Zhuge Liang's care.
Full nobly Zhuge Liang played protector's part,
Unceasing strove to win first place for Shu;
But Fate forbade; one night for aye his star
Went down behind the rampart of the hills.
Jiang Wei the strong inherited his task
And struggled on for years.
But Zhong Hui and Deng Ai
Attacked the Hans' last stronghold, and it fell.

Five sons of Cao Cao sat on the dragon throne,
And Sima Yan snatched the court from Cao Huang.
Before him bowed the kings of Shu and Wu,
Content to forfeit kingly power for life.
All down the ages rings the note of change,
For fate so rules it; none escapes its sway.
The Three Kingdoms have vanished as a dream,
The useless misery is ours to grieve.

THE END



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- delineating and titling "acts" (story arcs)
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- tightening up particularly confusing or incorrect language

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